Sand Chronicles

Volume 7

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Story thus far...

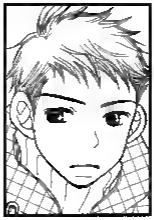
After her parents' divorce, Ann moves to rural Shimane with her mother. When Ann's mother commits suicide, Ann's new friends, Daigo and wealthy siblings Fuji and Shika, are a great support to her. But then Ann moves back to Tokyo to live with her father.

Ann finally commits to dating Fuji. On a study trip by the seaside, they spend the night together. But Ann realizes she is still in love with Daigo. Ann's father's longtime friend Kaede has become pregnant with his child, and Ann encourages them to marry. After thinking long and hard, Ann decides to leave Fuji, and once again finds herself all alone.

Main characters

Shika Tsukishima
Shika tried to manipulate Ann into having a nervous breakdown so she could steal Daigo.

Fuji Tsukishima
It seems like no matter how many times Ann rejects him, Fuji still wants to be with her.

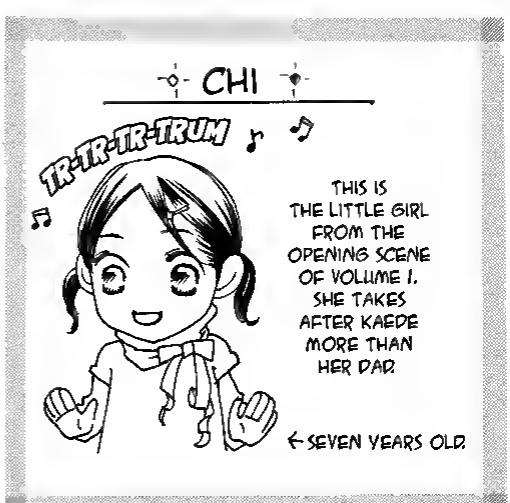


Daigo Kitamura
Daigo's friends encouraged him to date Ayumu, the girl who is tutoring him.

Ann Minase
Uncertain about her future, Ann decides to study Japanese literature at a junior college.

WINTER, AGE 20: SINGING SAND

WINTER, AGE 20: SINGING SAND

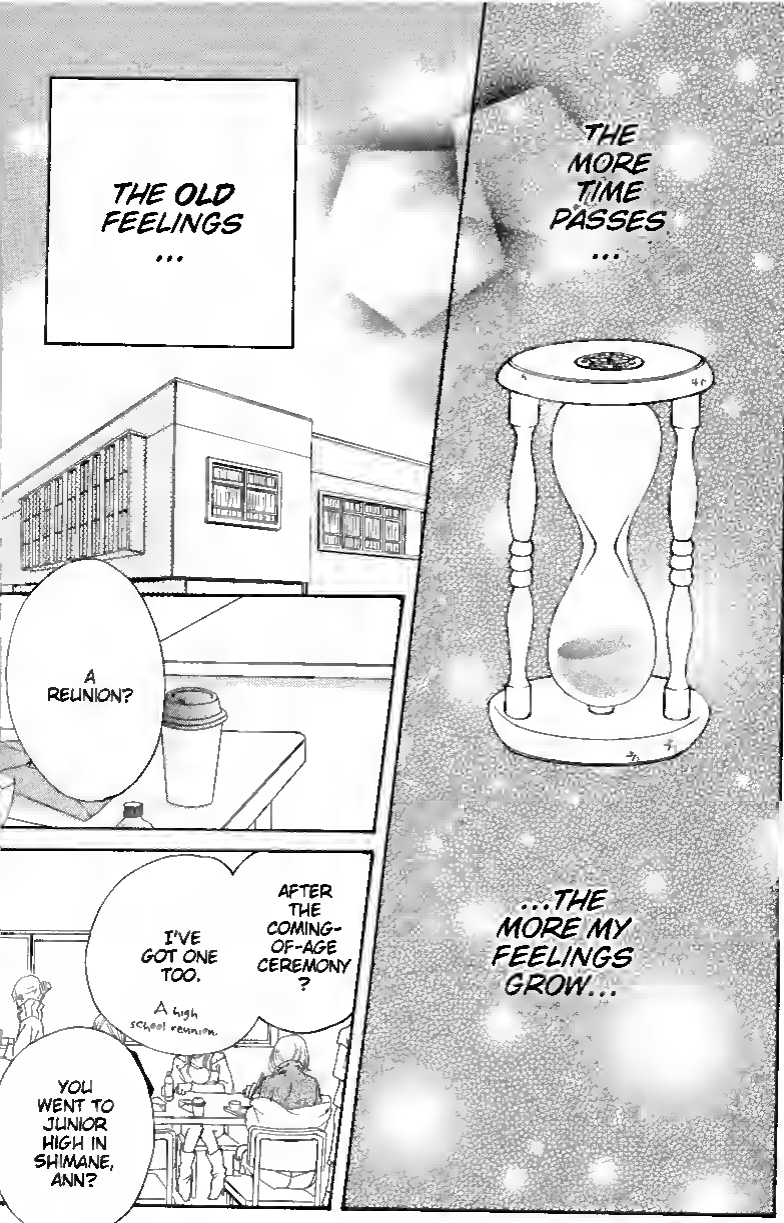

CHI
TR-TR-TR-TRUM
THIS IS THE LITTLE GIRL FROM THE OPENING SCENE OF VOLUME 1. SHE TAKES AFTER KAEDE MORE THAN HER DAD.
←SEVEN YEARS OLD

A-
A-
A-
AAN!

JUST A DREAM ...
ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZ
I HAVEN'T ...
...DREAMT ABOUT DAIGO ...
...FOR A LONG TIME.
OKAY, I'M OFF!
THANKS FOR ALL THE COOKING AND BABY-SITTING.
NO PROBLEM. IT'S FINE UNTIL I START MY NEW JOB.
WORK HARD SO WE CAN PAY BACK DAD'S LOANS!!
YOU CAN COUNT ON ME!!
We don't wanna be poor!
TWO YEARS AGO ...
Say "bye-bye"!
HA HA!
MAMA!
Off I go!

...AND WE ALL MOVED INTO A (USED) HOUSE IN THE TOKYO SUBURBS.
Outta the way!
VRRRRR
...DAD AND KAEDE GOT MARRIED...
IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE I GRADUATE FROM JUNIOR COLLEGE ...
Chii, that's dirty!
MY HALF-SISTER IS ONE AND A HALF NOW.
VOOM! VOOM!
...AND MY COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER.
CHEW
CHOMP
MUNCH
AAAGH!
FOOD?
CHI! THAT ISN'T FOOD!!
NO! NOT FOOD!
FOOOOD!

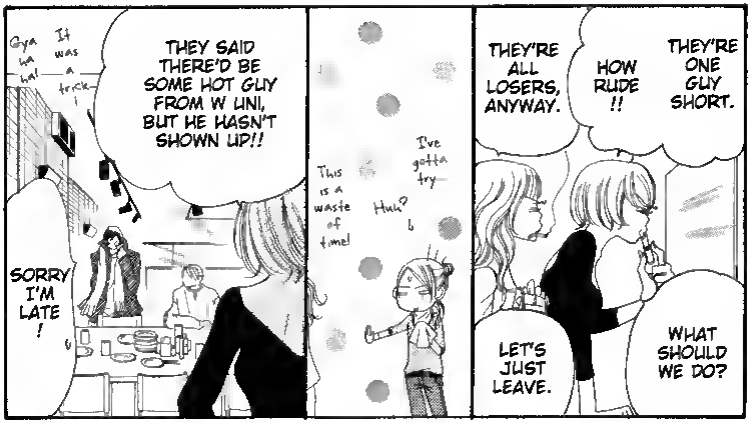
YESTERDAY, I GOT AN INVITATION TO MY CLASS REUNION IN SHIMANE.
You're Invited to Our Class Reunion!
KRUNCH KRUNCH KRUNCH
UGH... IT'S SOAKING WET.
GLOB
Baby Snacks
You're Invited to Our Class Reunion!
Be there or suffer the consequences!!
--Naka
THAT MUST BE WHY I DREAMED ABOUT DAIGO.
I DON'T GO BACK TO SHIMANE ANYMORE BECAUSE I'M AFRAID OF RUNNING INTO HIM.
YAAAAR
I HAVEN'T SEEN DAIGO IN THREE YEARS.
FWAP
...


THE OLD FEELINGS ...
A REUNION?
I'VE GOT ONE TOO.
A high school reunion.
AFTER THE COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY?
YOU WENT TO JUNIOR HIGH IN SHIMANE, ANN?
THE MORE TIME PASSES ...
...THE MORE MY FEELINGS GROW...

What if he says you look pretty?
GAH!
WHAT IF YOU FALL HEAD-OVER-HEELS AGAIN?
YOUR FIRST LOVE IS BOUND TO BE THERE! ♡
YOU MUST BE NERVOUS.
Reunions are weird
It's around here somewhere
I can't even find Shimane on the map!
MAMI DIDN'T HAVE A BOYFRIEND UNTIL COLLEGE.
IT DOESN'T DO ANY GOOD TO LOOK BACKWARD.
HEY, GUYS!
Hmm
SCOWL
FOOD
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN RELIVING THE PAST!
I'M MORE OF A FORWARD-LOOKING PERSON ...
EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT LOVE AND ROMANCE ...
AH HA HA ...
With the boys from F Uni? I'll pass
Beggars can't be choosers!
ME!
ME! ME! ME!
WHO'S UP FOR A GOKON PARTY?

NAO'S BOYFRIEND FOUND OUT ABOUT IT.
So she backed out
YOU PUT ME ON THE LIST?!
MY HEART IS DRIED UP.
BUT I'M LONELY.
WHAT ?
RETREAT
YOU ALWAYS SAY THAT!
SINGLES PARTIES AREN'T MY THING...
I lack feminine charm
SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM
YOU'RE SINGLE AREN'T YOU?
CHATTER
CHATTER
KYA HA HA HA!
FUJI...
...TOLD ME SOMETHING LIKE THAT ONCE.
ARGH ...
IF YOU THROW UP WALLS, YOU'LL NEVER FIND A BOYFRIEND.
See you there!!

KLUNK
AM I REALLY THROWING UP WALLS?
...THAN DAIGO OR I EVER COULD. HE'S OUT THERE.
...THE GUY WHO CAN MAKE YOU HAPPIER ...
ANN, ARE YOU DRINKING ?
GRIP
TRY...
I'VE GOTTA TRY!
...
EVERYTHING IS ABOUT DAIGO.
IT'S CALLED FIRST LOVE BECAUSE THERE'S A SECOND AND THIRD TIME, TOO!
W C
THIS SUCKS!
NEVER ORDER PONSHU OR SHOCHU!!
Try harder!
SHOCK
HUH? OH, I'LL HAVE POTATO SHOCHU!
WHAT'LL YOU HAVE NEXT?
I GOTTA TRY!!
WHACK


Gya ha ha!
It was a trick!
THEY SAID THERE'D BE SOME HOT GUY FROM W UNI, BUT HE HASN'T SHOWN UP!!
SORRY I'M LATE!
This is a waste of time!
Huh?
I've gotta try
THEY'RE ALL LOSERS, ANYWAY.
HOW RUDE!!
THEY'RE ONE GUY SHORT.
LET'S JUST LEAVE.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

HUH?
Sorry
You're way late!
We thought you'd never come!
AARGH
AGH!

NOOOOOOOO!!!
What's the matter?
I CAN'T ...
... BELIEVE IT!
I NEVER EXPECTED TO SEE YOU HERE.
ME NEITHER.
IT'S BEEN OVER A YEAR ...
... HASN'T IT?
YEAH.
YOU'RE GOING TO SINGLES PARTIES ////?
HEH..
WHAT'S WITH THOSE TWO?
AH HA HA!
HA HA
Really?
GAH!
SERIOUSLY?!
AND HE'S HER EX.
THEY'RE OLD FRIENDS.
From Shimane

YOU'RE WORKING?
GRAB
HE TOOK MY SHIFT ONCE, SO I COULDN'T SAY NO.
He said I could just sit here
YOU HAVE A JOB?
I'M SO JEALOUS!!
SHISH
MY COWORKER FORCED ME TO COME.
YANK
IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE SEATING !!!
...REMINDS ME OF ASADA.
She used to wear me out
ONLY ASADA WASN'T SO CLINGY.
ASA?
Bye-bye!
On to the next bar!
GYA HA HA!
FUJI'S LEAVING?!
THAT GIRL MAMI ...
HEH HEH...

SONODA TOLD ME HE RAN INTO EDAMOTO THE OTHER DAY.
ASA AND MICCHON GO TO S WOMEN'S COLLEGE. IT'S CLOSE TO MINE, SO WE MEET UP A LOT.
SONODA
MICCHON
They haven't changed.
EDACCHI
OH, REALLY?
THEY'RE ALL RIGHT.
I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN ...
HA HA!
HOW ARE THEY DOING THESE DAYS?
IT'S BEEN SO LONG...
...SINCE WE ALL GOT TO-GETHER.
WHEN YOU PASSED YOUR ENTRANCE EXAMS ...
...WE TALKED ABOUT THROWING A PARTY, BUT IT NEVER HAPPENED.
THAT'S BECAUSE ...
...I ASKED THEM NOT TO.
HUH?
I...
...WASN'T READY TO FACE YOU YET.

OH ...
TLING-A-LING
...
?
YOU CAN ANSWER IT. I DON'T MIND.
UH ...
THANKS.
BIP
WAS ...
... THAT ...
...
...YOUR ...
...GIRL-FRIEND?
Sounded like it...
IT WAS ...
BIP
HELLO ?
HUH
It's cold ...
YOU'RE AT MY APART-MENT?
BUT I TOLD YOU TODAY I WAS ...
YOU KNOW WHERE THE KEY IS, RIGHT?
YEAH. I'LL BE HOME SOON.
UM ...
OKAY, WAIT THERE.

...MARIKO.
WHAAAAAAAAAT?!!
MARIKO MOGAMI (22)
FUJI'S COUSIN
MY FAMILY'S AGAINST IT.
THEY SAY IT ISN'T RESPECTABLE.
I...
...WANTED TO MAKE THINGS CLEAR...
...SO I MOVED OUT AND GOT MY OWN PLACE.
MY FAMILY SENDS MONEY EACH MONTH...
...BUT I WANT TO AT LEAST COVER MY OWN RENT...
...SO I GOT A JOB...
WE'RE DATING NOW.
WHAT?!
SHOCK
...
WELL...
...I GUESS IT ISN'T ILLEGAL, BUT...

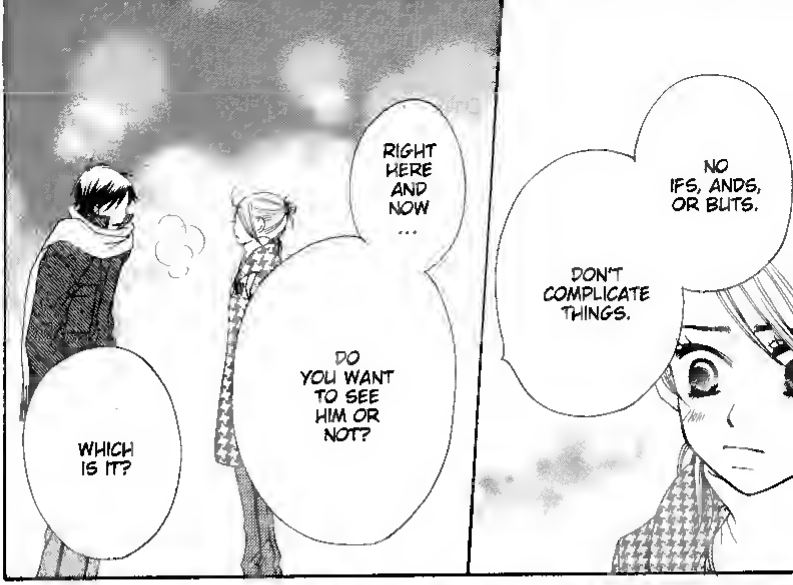
...
HMM ...
Actually, they might be good together
I'VE ALWAYS LIKED YOU.
WHAT A SURPRISE!

TIME
...
...KEEPS MOVING FORWARD
...

I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.
IT MIGHT ...
...SOUND WEIRD COMING FROM ME...
...BUT ...
...I REALLY AM HAPPY FOR YOU.
HOW ABOUT YOU, ANN?
ME?
HAVE YOU GOTTEN OVER DAIGO?
OH, THAT ...
I'M NOT SURE.
IT WASN'T EASY FOR ME, YOU KNOW.

FOR A LONG TIME AFTER WE BROKE UP...
...I HAD A ROUGH TIME.
I SWORE I'D NEVER FALL IN LOVE AGAIN.
BUT...
...AT LEAST IT WAS A CLEAN BREAK.
I KNEW I COULD NEVER GET YOU BACK.
SO...
I HAD TO MOVE ON.
BUT YOU AND DAIGO...
...AND I THINK...
...THAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK.
YOU STILL ...
...HAVE FEELINGS FOR EACH OTHER...
WHY DON'T YOU GO TALK TO HIM?
YOU REALLY SHOULD.

YOU GOT THE INVITATION ...
...TO THE REUNION, RIGHT?
I'm not gonna go, though.
GO AND ...
...TALK TO HIM.
FIND OUT...
...WHAT HE MEANS TO YOU.
THAT'LL BE A START.
I CAN'T.
BUT WHAT IF HE'S STILL WITH AYUMU?
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
HONK HONK
JUST BE HONEST WITH HIM.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT ...
...I WOULD SAY.


RIGHT HERE AND NOW ...
DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM OR NOT?
WHICH IS IT?
NO IFS, ANDS, OR BUTS.
DON'T COMPLICATE THINGS.

...BUT ...
...I LIKED IT EVEN BETTER WHEN YOU SMILED.
AND I LIKED THE WAY YOU'D GIVE ME A LITTLE SHOVE WHEN I WAS BEING STUBBORN.
I USED TO THINK IT WAS CUTE WHEN YOU GOT THAT TROUBLED LOOK...

WE CAN NEVER GO BACK IN TIME ...
...BUT I WISH ...
...I COULD SEE YOU REALLY SMILE AGAIN.
HONK HONK

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO WEAR FOR THE CEREMONY?
UM ...
ANN!
I...
...HAVEN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT.
YOU HAVEN'T ?
I just wore a dress to mine
Hmm
She should wear a furisode
Oh to be 20 again!
KISS
HERE AND NOW ...
DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM OR NOT?
SIGH

TOTTORI STATION
鳥取駅
WHICH IS IT?
SLIP
Agh!
WHOOPS!
DOWN SHE GOES...

HONK HONK
WEARING A KIMONO IN ALL THIS SNOW...
NOW THAT'S DETERMINATION!
Oops! There goes another one
ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO GO?
YEAH.
IT'S NOT WORTH ...
...GOING ALL THE WAY HOME
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
DO YOU WANT TO?
NOT REALLY
COME ON, I BET YOU DO!
Don't lie to me!
CHAK
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO...
...COME ALL THE WAY TO TOTTORI TO SEE ME.
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
FOR ONCE ...
...I WANTED TO SHOW THAT I CARE.

SORRY I NEVER DID BEFORE.
I DITCHED YOU, REMEMBER?!
IT WAS DESTINED ...
...NOT TO LAST.
YOU WERE VULNERABLE ...
...AND I TOOK HER PLACE.
IT WAS AWK-WARD ...
...AND WE WERE BOTH UNHAPPY.
WE'RE 20...
...AND COMING OF AGE ...
WE COULDN'T GO ON LIKE THAT.
...SO IT'S TIME FOR A FRESH START.

THANKS, DAIGO.
FOR BEING SOMEONE SPECIAL IN MY LIFE.
WELL ... I gotta go
THE STATION IS THIS WAY.
Yeah.
I KNOW.
THE REUNION'S TONIGHT, RIGHT?
YOU'LL BE THERE PLENTY EARLY.
That's good, right?
SAY HELLO TO ANN FOR ME.
I mean it
IT'S ANN MINASE NOW, RIGHT?
How confusing

SHE WON'T COME.
SHE DOESN'T EVEN SHOW UP FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF HER MOTHER'S DEATH.
YOU KNOW WHAT ...?
WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT HER...
...YOU LOOK...
...SO ANXIOUS.
HAVE FAITH IN YOURSELF!

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT.
YOU'RE ...
...LIVING LIFE ON YOUR OWN TERMS— STRAIGHT-FORWARD AND HONEST.
AND THAT'S ALL RIGHT.

Winter, Age 20
Singing Sand

Welcome to Volume 7! And, as always, thanks for reading! Ann and the rest have grown up. Now they're 20 years old. Sometimes I wonder if the younger readers of **Betsucomi** are keeping up.

About the crying sand or... to be more precise, **singing** sand. You can really hear a cute, squeaky sound when you walk on it. When I went to the beach on a research trip, a local man told me that it was squeaking particularly well that day. Lucky me!

As for the Tottori Sand Dunes, there was lots of snow in the Sanin area when I went. The dunes were like ski slopes. I felt so lost out there in the falling snow and dunes. In its own way, that was fun. I like having a research trip as an excuse to travel by train.

You're Invited to Our Class Reunion!

NAKA-HARA!

SUZUKI!!

HUG

YOU TWO SEE EACH OTHER ALL THE TIME!

IT'S BEEN SO LONG!!!

DRAMA QUEENS

□□□□□□□□□

□□□□□□□□□□

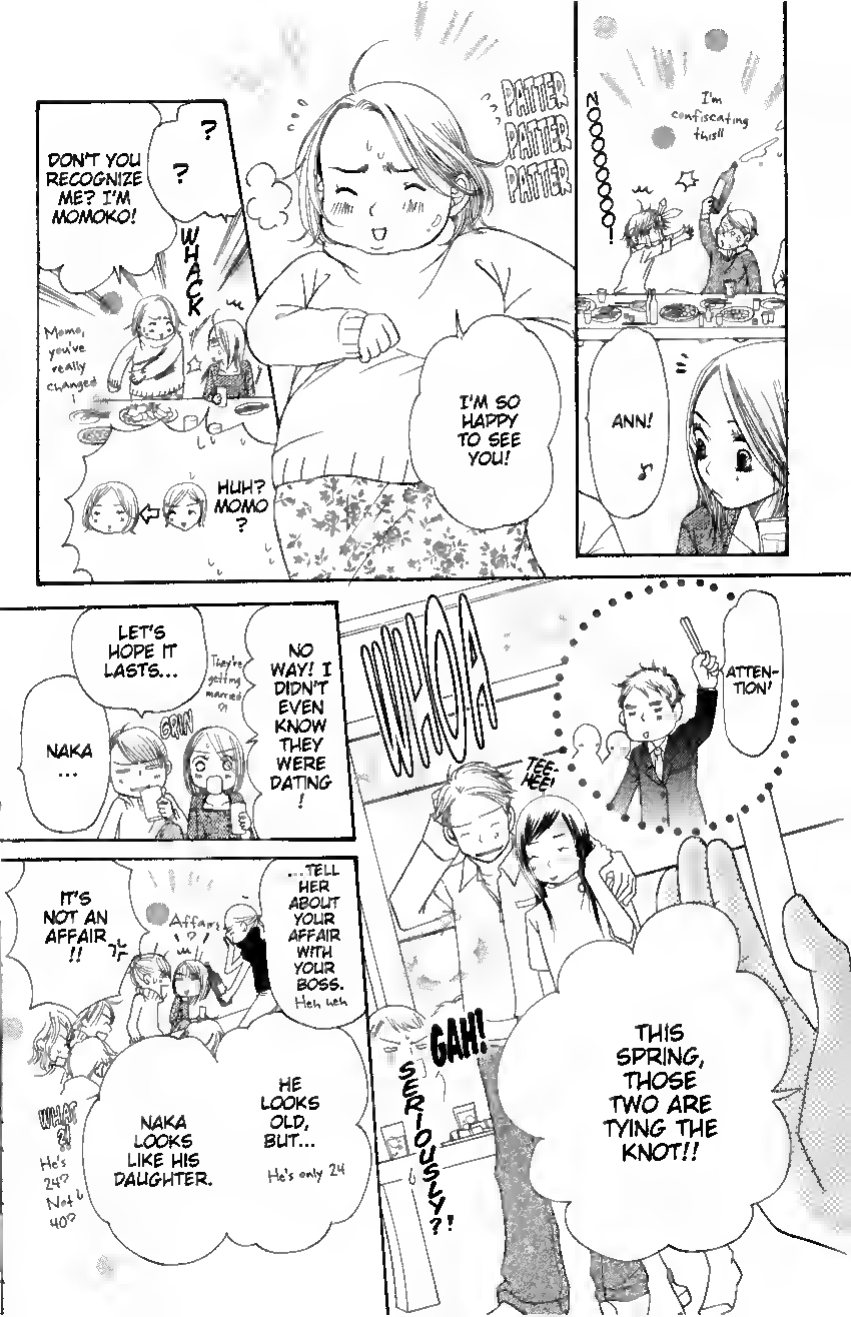
□□□□□□□□□□

□□□□□□□□□□

Tottori Sand Dunes

UH..
HMPH
Because of a guy?!
HI, NAKA!
HOW LONG IS SHE GOING TO STAY AWAY?
NAH.
It's probably because of Daigo
PSH
DID ANN RSVP?
THE SAME OLD FACES, AS USUAL.
People who never moved away
ANN!!
IS IT REALLY YOU?!!
BIEF
POEF
POW
You should've told me you were coming!
Yikes
IS EVERYONE HERE?
WHERE'S DAIGO?
BA-DUMP
Hello!
I...
...SNUCK AWAY FROM MY CEREMONY IN TOKYO AND CAUGHT A PLANE...

THEY'VE BEEN TOGETHER A LONG TIME.
HE'S IN TOTTORI.
HE'LL BE LATE.
He e-mailed me
Tottori?
HE'S WITH AYUMU.
SHE LIVES IN A DORM AT COLLEGE.
She's smart!
KANPAI!!
SO THIS IS WHAT IT TASTES LIKE!
AT LAST!
WOO HOO
HICCUP
WE'RE FINALLY OLD ENOUGH TO DRINK!
I KNOW YOU KIDS HAVE HAD ALCOHOL BEFORE!
So don't play dumb!
Omigosh Sake? Never heard of it
YOU CAN'T FOOL ME!
GLUP GLUP GLUP
FORMER TEACHER
HERE, TEACH'— LET ME FILL YOU UP.
OKI, YOU'RE STILL 19!
GYA HA HA
MIDDLE SCHOOL REUNION

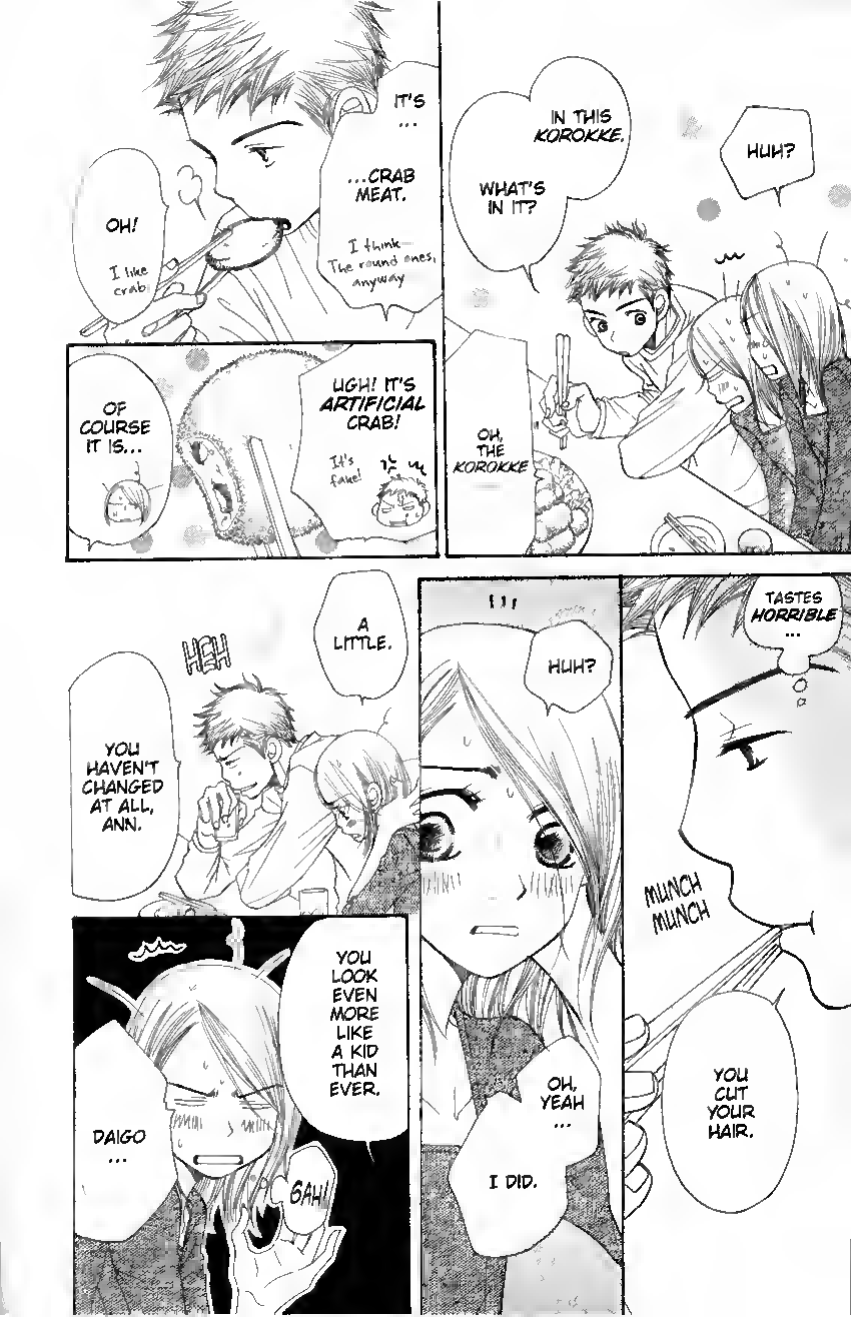

PATTER PATTER PATTER
I'm confiscating this!!
NOOOOOOO!
ANN!
I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU!
DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME? I'M MOMOKO!
? ?
WHACK
Momo, you've really changed!
HUH? MOMO?
LET'S HOPE IT LASTS...
They're getting married!?
NO WAY! I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEY WERE DATING!
GRAH
NAKA...
WHOA
ATTEN-TION!
TEE-HEE!
...TELL HER ABOUT YOUR AFFAIR WITH YOUR BOSS. Heh heh
IT'S NOT AN AFFAIR!!
Affair? 1 2 1 um!
WHAAT?!
He's 24? Not 40?
NAKA LOOKS LIKE HIS DAUGHTER.
HE LOOKS OLD, BUT...
He's only 24
GAH!
SERIOUSLY?!
THIS SPRING, THOSE TWO ARE TYING THE KNOT!!

KYA HA HA
That sucks
Fuji isn't here
I GUESS IT'S ONLY NATURAL ...
...THAT EVERYONE HAS CHANGED.
I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU, BUT...
I was embarrassed
Wow
It's not an affair!
WE CAN NEVER GO BACK IN TIME...
...BUT I WISH ...
SCUFF
RATTLE
GAH!
ANN! YOU SPILLED YOUR DRINK!!
What a waste Let's clean it up
GYA HA HA HA
...I COULD SEE YOU LIKE THAT AGAIN...

LOOK, IT'S DAIGO.
YOU'RE LATE!
Someone, get a towel!
GYAAAH!
RATTLE
DUMP
Wow, what a mess!
HEY, WATCH IT!
YOUR SHOES ARE FULL OF SAND!
You're filthy!
Where have you been?

BLUSH
LIH-OH
...
B-DMP
HE'S HERE
...
I CAN'T ...
...LOOK HIM IN THE EYE.
B-DMP
B-DMP
IT'S BEEN OVER THREE AND A HALF YEARS...
LET'S END THIS.
B-DMP
...SINCE THAT SUMMER.
FLASH

THANKS
I NEED A PLATE.
Hand me one.
Here ya go
Let's get you started
Thanks again
FROZEN
BLINK
...SAY SOMETHING.
WHAT'S IN THIS?
PLEASE...


IT'S ...
...CRAB MEAT.
I think— The round ones, anyway
OH! I like crab.
OF COURSE IT IS...
UGH! IT'S ARTIFICIAL CRAB!
It's fake!
IN THIS KOROKKE,
WHAT'S IN IT?
HUH?
OH, THE KOROKKE
A LITTLE.
HEH
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL, ANN.
HUH?
TASTES HORRIBLE ...
MUNCH MUNCH
YOU CUT YOUR HAIR.
OH, YEAH ...
I DID.
YOU LOOK EVEN MORE LIKE A KID THAN EVER.
DAIGO ...
GAH!

YOU HAVEN'T...
...CHANGED EITHER!
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT...
THE ROOM IS SPINNING!
SPIN-SPIN-SPIN-SPIN
RRRRIP
RIP
RIP
GROSS! PUT SOME CLOTHES ON!
I'm eating!
OH, WOW... WHAT A GROUP!
SLUMP
Men are idiots!
GYA HA HA HA
OKAY, EVERYONE... TIME FOR THE CLOSING CEREMONY!
This is cool!
Gya ha ha ha!
WOO-HOO!

LATER, GUYS!
Party's over?
GYA HA HA!
BOW!
Let's do it again some-time!
CLAP CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP CLAP
YEAH!
CLAP CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP CLAP
WOO-HOO!
ARE YOU FLYING BACK TO TOKYO TOMORROW?
Come back soon!
I'LL PASS. GRANDMA GETS UPSET IF I COME HOME LATE.
UH...
WE'RE GOING TO OKI'S HOUSE FOR THE AFTER-PARTY...
WANNA COME, ANN?
SACCHAN WILL GIVE US A LIFT.
Let's go!
HUH? Wait!
YANK
ANN...
I COULDN'T SAY A THING...
GYA HA HA!
ANN!
FIND OUT WHAT HE MEANS TO YOU.
GLANCE
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
Sacchan drove?

MEET ME...
...AT TEN TOMORROW, IN FRONT OF THE STATION.
GYA HA HA!
DRAG DRAG
HUH?
TOSS
TURN
TWEET
CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
WHAT?
Welcome home, Ann.
You reek of spirits!

CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
TWEET
JR
...
GOT A HANG-OVER?
BLEUGH
OH, UH ... I'M FINE NOW.
HERE. Have a cold drink
How late were you out last night?
...
I'LL SEE YOU TO THE AIRPORT.

...THERE'S ALWAYS A REASON BEHIND EVERYTHING YOU DO.
I'M ASKING BECAUSE ...
KLAK
BUT I CAN'T READ YOU ANYMORE.
KLIK
KLAK
WHY?
YOU DID?
KLAK
IT WAS THE SAME FOR ME.
THE TWO OF US...
AYUMU AND I BROKE UP YESTERDAY.
I HEARD THAT ...
...YOU AND FUJI DIDN'T LAST LONG.
NAKA TOLD ME.

WE HAVEN'T CHANGED.
NOT AT ALL ...
...IN THREE YEARS.
LIKE I SAID ...
...I ...
...CAN'T READ YOU.
KLAK
WANT TO GRAB A BITE?
Some Izumo Soba?
GRRROWL
BUS TO AIRPORT
...IF WE GO NOW WE'LL BE WAY TOO EARLY.
I KNOW.
My flight isn't until tonight
BUS TO AIRPORT
WELL ...

WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE.
SSSSHH
IZUMO SUSAA
GRRR
THIS PLACE!!
GRRR
This is good
Told you
IN THE FALL OF OUR THIRD YEAR OF JUNIOR HIGH.
YEAH.
I BEGGED YOU TO TAKE ME TO IZUMO SHRINE.
AND VISITED THE MIRROR POND FOR ANOTHER LOVE FORTUNE AT YAEGAKI SHRINE
WE DID SHIME-NAWA LOVE FORTUNE-TELLING
AH HA HA
AND AFTER THAT WE TOOK A WALK HERE
THAT WAS A TOUGH DAY FOR ME.
Nothing but fortunes
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
THAT WAS THE DAY...
...I DECIDED TO MOVE IN WITH DAD IN TOKYO.

IF...
...I HAD STAYED IN SHIMANE...
...I WONDER IF...
...WE WOULD HAVE BROKEN UP ANYWAY.
...NEAR DAIGO...
JR出雲市駅
IZUMOSHI STATION
NEXT STOP, NIMA ...
KLAK
...A PLACE ...
...I WANNA GO.
WE'VE GOT MORE TIME TO KILL.
YEAH. THERE'S ...

NO...
...NOT THERE.
KLAK
NIMA?
UH..
THE SAND MUSEUM?
...WHERE THE "SINGING SAND" IS!
OH...
KOTOGAHAMA BEACH.
MAJI STATION
THE STOP AFTER THAT.
KLAK

YAAAY!
SQUEAK
That's kind of morbid
REALLY?
QUARTZ?
What's that?
Geology freak
THE SAND HAS TO BE PERFECTLY POLISHED QUARTZ.
IF THE BEACH OR WATER IS POLLUTED AT ALL, IT WON'T SQUEAK.
The weather's a factor too...
YEAH...
...AND SAND THAT STOPS SQUEAKING IS CALLED "KILLED SAND."
IT WON'T SING IF IT'S DIRTY?
IT'S A NATURAL POLLUTION BAROMETER!
SQUEAK
IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME HERE, ANN?
I haven't been here in a while
SQUEAK
BUT I LIKE THE WAY IT FEELS.
OH! THE SAND REALLY DOES SQUEAK! LISTEN! IT SQUEAKS!
Cool!
YEP!
SQUEAK
SOME OF THE ONES UP NORTH DO.
They've got the same sand
CONDITIONS HAVE TO BE JUST RIGHT FOR SAND TO SQUEAK.
I learned about it at school
OTHER BEACHES DON'T SQUEAK, DO THEY?
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
OF COURSE THEY ARE.
Keep your shoes on!
MY FEET ARE COLD!!
Brrr!
I'VE BEEN A COUPLE TIMES.
On school trips
WEIRD. I WONDER WHY IT SQUEAKS.
SQUEAK
SQUEAK

THE WINTER I WAS 12...
...BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE TIME.
I WANTED TO COME HERE TOO ....
...MOM TOOK ME TO THE SAND MUSEUM.
"I WILL..."
...EVERY-THING STARTED.
THAT WINTER... THAT'S WHEN...

WOULD YOU MIND...
"...NEVER LEAVE YOU."
...IF I... TELL YOU HOW I FEEL NOW?
MAYBE YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT...

GOING OFF TO TOKYO ....
...AND FIGHTING WITH YOU THAT DAY...
...AND...
...LETTING GO OF YOUR HAND.
...BUT...
I REGRET THE CHOICES I MADE.

DON'T BE SO QUICK TO SAY YOU'LL FALL WITH ME.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED ...
...I SHOULD HAVE NEVER LET YOU GO.

I...

IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN GOOD FOR US TO GO DOWN TOGETHER.
...DON'T REGRET ANYTHING.
I THINK WE MADE THE RIGHT DECISION.
WE...
...DIDN'T MAKE ANY MISTAKES.

KSSSHH
ANN ...
HUH?
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO THE TOTTORI SAND DUNES?
NO.
I...
...WENT THERE BY MYSELF YESTERDAY.
IT WAS SNOWING.
IT'S THE OFF-SEASON, SO NO ONE WAS AROUND.
IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN, BUT...
...WHEN I STOOD THERE ALL ALONE, SURROUNDED BY ALL THAT SAND, I FELT SO... INSECURE.

THERE WASN'T A THING IN SIGHT...
I HAD NO IDEA WHERE I WAS...
...AND THE GROUND UNDERFOOT WAS UNSTABLE.

THERE WAS NOTHING TO GUIDE ME AND NO CLEAR DESTINATION.
I COULDN'T FIND MY WAY. I WAS LOST.
I GOT CONFUSED. I STARTED TO PANIC.
THERE WAS NO REASON FOR ME TO BE SO NERVOUS.
BUT I WAS PARALYZED.
I THINK ...
...EVERYONE FEELS THAT WAY SOMETIMES.
AND THEN I THOUGHT ...
...MAYBE THAT'S HOW YOU FEEL ALL THE TIME...
...EVER SINCE THE WINTER WE WERE 12.

...
I WANTED TO BEAR HALF YOUR BURDEN ...
...BUT...
...YOU WOULDN'T LET ME.
WHEN I SAW YOU SUFFER...
I KNOW IT WASN'T YOUR CHOICE ...
...BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T LET IT GO.
WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT...
...OUR BURDEN IS OURS ALONE TO BEAR.
YOU CAN'T ERASE YOUR PAST.

THE ONE WHO CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY...
...ISN'T ME OR FUJI.
IT'S YOU.
YOU DON'T NEED THAT.
YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF.
I'M THROUGH MAKING PROMISES I CAN'T KEEP.

...AND NEVER GIVE UP.
...YOU WANTED TO TELL ME...
...SINCE WE MET LAST NIGHT?
YOU'RE TELLING ME...
...TO GO ON ALONE.
YOU'RE REJECTING ME? MY LAST HOPE...
KEEP TRYING ...
...
IS THAT ALL...

THE SAND BLOWS INTO THE AIR...
...THROUGH A VEIL OF SAND.
HE ISN'T SMILING. OR ANGRY. OR SAD.
...AND I SEE HIM...
WOOOOSH
THE PERSON I FELL IN LOVE WITH ISN'T WEAK!

HE LOOKS STRAIGHT AT ME...
...WITH HONEST EYES...
...THAT I'VE NEVER KNOWN TO BE CLOUDED.

HIS GAZE...
...IS FIRM AND DIRECT.
YOU...
...CAN GO ON BY YOURSELF, RIGHT?
TO THE AIRPORT?
BRUSH
YES.

...AND GOTTEN MARRIED AND HAD KIDS...
...AFTER WE'VE BOTH MET SOMEONE ELSE...
...WE'LL BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THIS AND LAUGH.
SOME-DAY...
YEAH.
GOOD-BYE.
THANKS.

BE HAPPY.
PROMISE ME!
SQUEAK
ANN...
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
WE DIDN'T ...

WE'RE SO SERIOUS ABOUT THE PATHS WE CHOOSE...
...AND EVERY STEP OF THE WAY WE'RE CONFUSED AND LOST...
...MAKE ANY MISTAKES.
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
...AND THIS IS WHERE WE END UP.

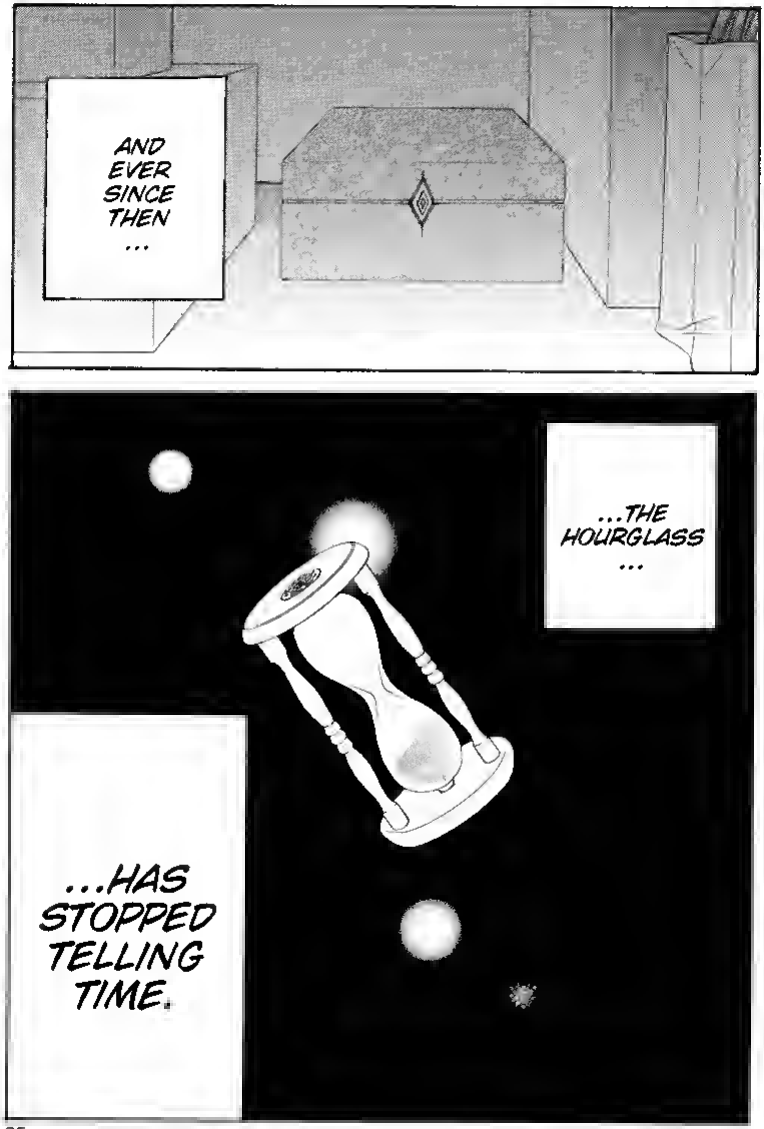
SQUEAK
EVEN IF I COULD TURN BACK TIME...
...AND DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN...
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
"I WILL ..."
...I'D FIND MYSELF RIGHT HERE AGAIN.

"...NEVER LEAVE YOU."
SQUEAK
BUT THIS TIME... I'M NOT GOING TO CRY.

MAMI, SHOULDN'T YOU BE JOB HUNTING INSTEAD?
AGAIN?
A SINGLES PARTY?
What a pain
ANN!
Men don't fall for that
20,000 yen!
I bet 15,000 yen it doesn't happen!
WIGGLE
WIGGLE
I'll use my sexy bed!
WHY? I'LL FIND A MAN TO SUPPORT ME!!
Marry for money!!
*About $20
*About $15
WE'RE HOME.
Sorry we're late
Diapers
3
Say, "Aw"
GIGGLE

LET GO!
NO, CHI. THAT'S NOT FOOD!
FOOD?
FOOOOOD!!
MUNCH
MUNCH
AW, NOT AGAIN!
CHOMP
CHOMP
CHOMP
KIDS CRACKERS
EWW. IT'S DRENCHED!
CLAK
NO MATTER HOW HARD I FIGHT IT ...
...MY MEMORIES OF DAIGO ONLY MAKE ME WEAKER.

I LOCKED UP MY HEART ...
KLIK
KLANK
CHAK
...AND HID IT AWAY IN A CLOSET.
KA-CHAK
OOMPH!

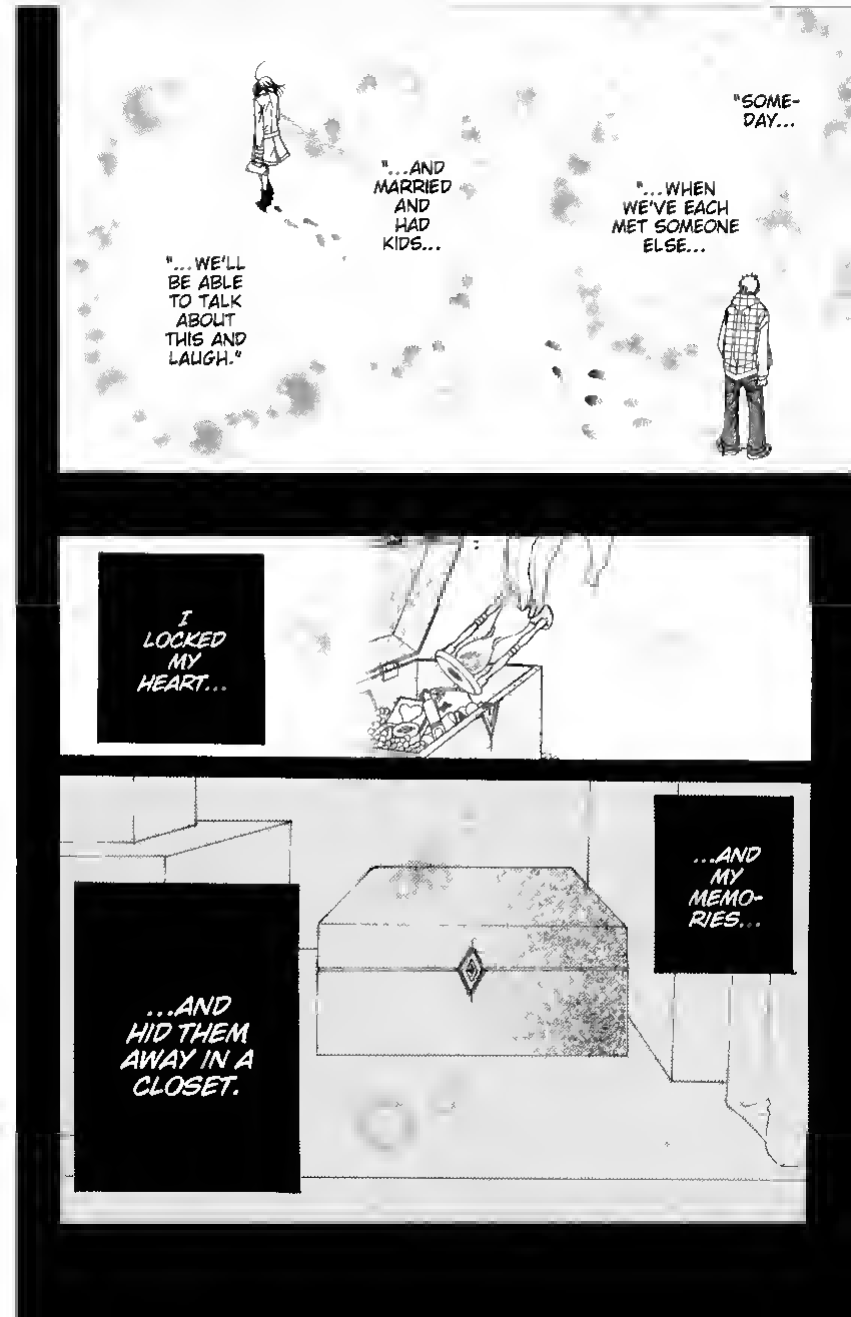

AND EVER SINCE THEN ...
...THE HOURGLASS ...
...HAS STOPPED TELLING TIME.

MANAGER
KEIICHIRO SAKURA
I AM WHO I AM. I GUESS THAT'S KIND OF A MACHO ATTITUDE. IT CAN BE HARD FOR OTHER PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH, THOUGH.

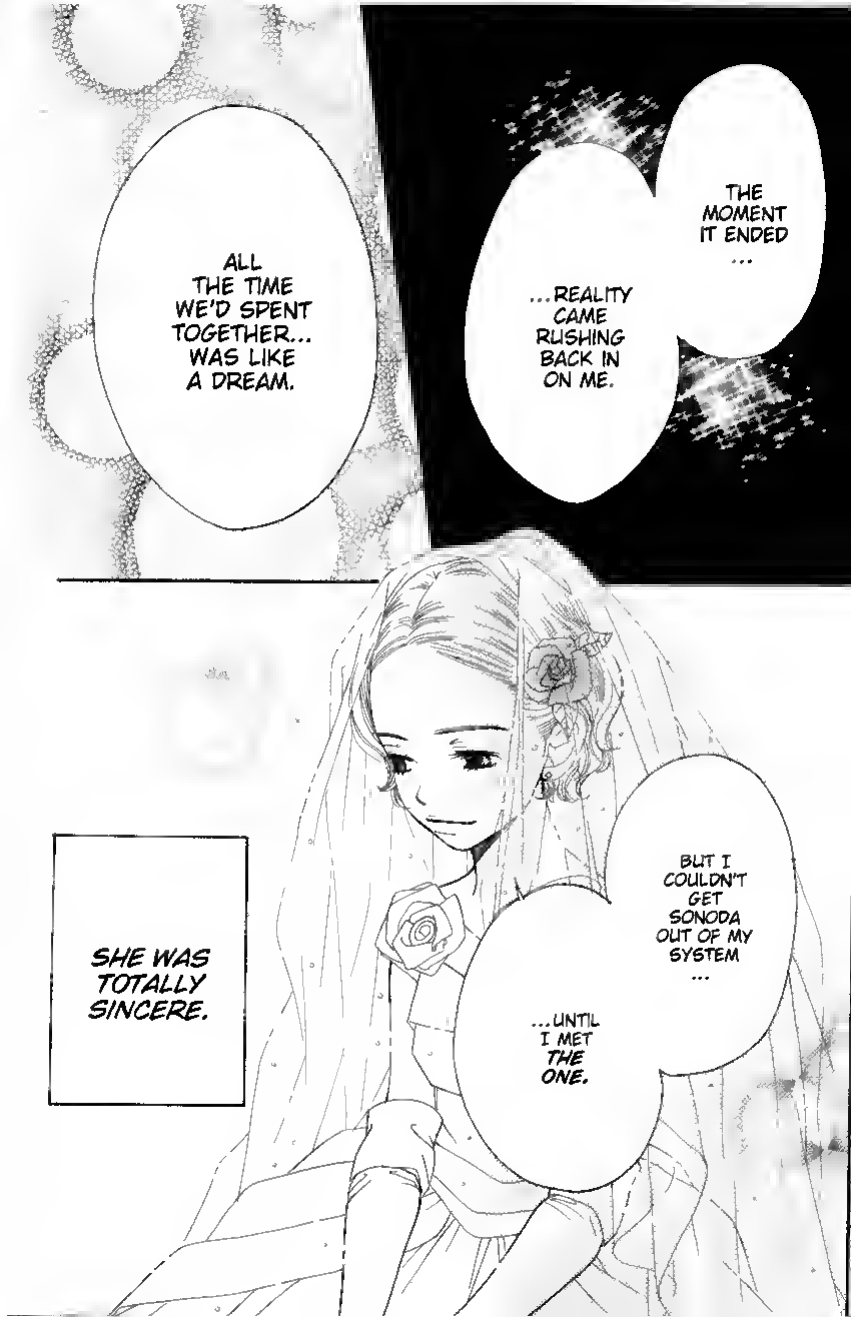
WINTER, AGE 26: EVANESCENT

KURO
PASSED ON...
KURO!!
TING
2ND GENERATION

I hope Daigo and I will be together for the rest of our lives.
Ann
"I WILL ..."
"...NEVER LEAVE YOU."
"YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF."
"TRY HARDER ..."


"...WE'LL BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THIS AND LAUGH."
"...AND MARRIED AND HAD KIDS...
"...WHEN WE'VE EACH MET SOMEONE ELSE...
"SOME-DAY...
I LOCKED MY HEART...
...AND HID THEM AWAY IN A CLOSET.
...AND MY MEMO-RIES...

SIX YEARS HAVE PASSED ...
FROM HERE ...
...MY LIFE BACK THEN DOESN'T SEEM REAL
LITTLE THINGS HE'D SAY WOULD TURN MY WORLD COMPLETELY UPSIDE DOWN!
ONE MINUTE, EVERYTHING WAS ROSY— THE NEXT, I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL OVER.
EVERY DAY WAS AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER-COASTER.


ALL THE TIME WE'D SPENT TOGETHER... WAS LIKE A DREAM.
THE MOMENT IT ENDED ...
...REALITY CAME RUSHING BACK IN ON ME.
BUT I COULDN'T GET SONODA OUT OF MY SYSTEM ...
...UNTIL I MET THE ONE.
SHE WAS TOTALLY SINCERE.

THE FALL WE WERE 26...
Congratulations!
KLAP KLAP KLAP
I THOUGHT SHE'D NEVER GET OVER HIM...
I'M HAPPY FOR HER.
Oh Micchon
SHE WAS A WRECK ...
...AFTER THE BREAK-UP.
...MICCHON GOT MARRIED...
...AND NOT TO SONODA.
WELL, THE WAY SONODA LEFT HER... IT WAS AWFUL!
I don't blame her
IT HAPPENED FOUR YEARS AGO.

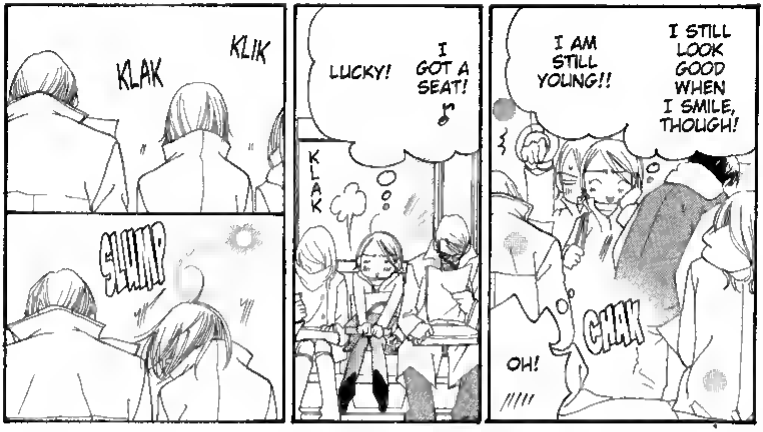
OKAY, EVERYONE! GATHER TOGETHER FOR A PHOTO.
SHE LEARNED THAT PEOPLE CHANGE... YOU CAN'T HANG ON TO THEM FOREVER.
SHE FOUND THE STRENGTH AND COURAGE TO MOVE ON.
SONODA FOUND SOME-ONE ELSE ...
...AND DUMPED MICCHON ON THE SPOT.
ASA IS HAPPILY MARRIED TO HER LONGTIME BOYFRIEND. THEY'VE GOT ONE CHILD...
...AND ANOTHER ON THE WAY.
THANKS.
WATCH YOUR FEET.
OOMPH!
BLEAGH!
REALLY?!
ANN, YOU'RE FROWNING.
I CHANGED JOBS THIS SPRING ...
HEH HEH
EDACCHI GRADUATED FROM COLLEGE ...
...AND WORKS FOR A MAJOR MANU-FACTURING COMPANY.

Gah!
IT'S FROM STARING AT THE COMPUTER ALL DAY AT WORK.
WORK KEEPS YOU PRETTY BUSY, HUH?
ARE YOU OKAY? YOU LOOK TIRED.
I'M FINE.
JUST WORKING HARD.
K-CHAK
AGE 26

ANN...
MY DAY-DREAMING DAYS ARE OVER.
NOW I LIVE IN THE WORLD OF REALITY.
HONKHONK
WANNA GRAB DINNER WITH US?
TAP TAP
TAP TAP
TAP TAP
Um...
NO, THANKS.
GOTTA FINISH INPUTTING THIS DATA.
Sorry...
SUIT YOUR-SELF.
See you tomorrow
AAAARGH!
TAP TAP TAP
GUESS WHAT!
She's so anti-social!
I HEARD MISS SAKASHITA TRANSFERRED HER FROM ONE OF OUR BRANCH OFFICES.
WE DON'T USUALLY ACCEPT JUNIOR COLLEGE GRADS.
Except as part-timers
SHE MUST BE A GOOD BUTT-KISSER.

CHIEF SAKASHITA (39)
THE WITCH
SOUNDS LIKE THE WITCH'S KIND OF GAL.
Twins!
NO MATTER HOW HARD THEY CHEW HER OUT, SHE DOESN'T BREAK DOWN. SHE DOESN'T USE ANY FEMININE WILES.
THAT'S WHAT MISS SAKASHITA SAID.
SIX YEARS AGO ...
Ah ha ha!
Tough girls don't get married!
...GIRLS DON'T HAVE TO BE TOUGH.
NOWADAYS ...
REALLY?
I HEAR SHE NEVER CRIES.
I WANT TO BE STRONG.
I WANT TO BE ...
...THE KIND OF WOMAN WHO CAN MAKE IT ON HER OWN.
"KEEP TRYING ..."
"...AND NEVER GIVE UP."
...I SWORE ...
...I WOULD NEVER CRY AGAIN.

YAWWWN
KLIK
KLAK
KLIK
KLAK
THAT'S ALL I WANT.
KLIK
KLAK
NOD NOD NOD
KLIK
KLAK
...EVERY DAY STINKS.
TAKING THE LAST TRAIN HOME ...
So sleepy!
MUTTER MUTTER MUTTER
IS 26 STILL YOUNG?
GUESS IT'S BORDER-LINE...
I'VE GOT A PIMPLE.
YIKES!
MY SKIN LOOKS AWFUL TOO.
I LOOK EXHAUSTED.
GRIN
CRUSH
MUTTER MUTTER
I'M LOSING MY HAIR ...
And I've got bags under my eyes...
JOLT
LEAN


KLIK
KLAK
CHUMP
I GOT A SEAT!
LUCKY!
KLAK
I AM STILL YOUNG!!
I STILL LOOK GOOD WHEN I SMILE, THOUGH!
CHAK
OH!

IF I FALL ASLEEP, I'LL MISS MY STOP!!
UH-OH!
WHUP
GASP

LEAN
UH-OH ...
NOD
DOZE
I'M CARRYING IMPORTANT COMPANY DOCUMENTS TOO.
SQUEEZE

ZZZ
KLAK
KLIK
...LIKE...
FEELS GOOD ...
...FLOATING IN WATER ...
I'M DRIFTING ...
KLAK
....DRIFTING AWAY...

GASP
EXCUSE ME!!
KLAK
I GET OFF AT THE NEXT STOP.
I...
I'M SORRY!!
AAGH !!
NEXT STOP, HACHIOJI ...
JOLT
I BECOME ONE WITH THE WATER ...
...AND MELT INTO NOTHING-NESS ...
UM...

ANN'S STOP
HACHIOJI
SHINJUKU
MISSED HER STOP..
I MISSED MY STOP !!
And this is the last train!
SHOCK
HACHIOJI ?!
SORRY, I GOT MAKEUP ON YOUR COAT!
All over it
IT WON'T JUST WIPE OFF!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
AAAAHH
MY BAG'S GONE!!!
?
HUH?
What the
I SAID, IT'S ALL RIGHT.
HERE !
MONEY FOR THE CLEANERS!

NOTHING OF VALUE WILL TURN UP.
You can be sure of that.
OKAY ...
...PICK-POCKETS ...
...ON THE LAST TRAIN TOO.
You gotta be careful
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!
STUMBLE
First, I better call the credit card company. Then—
THAT GUY FROM THE TRAIN ...
UM, ABOUT THAT MONEY ...
Oh, man...
TAXI
Board Here
IT'S HIM ...
DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH FOR A CAB?
UM ...

I'M NOT GIVING IT TO YOU.
Greedy!
NO, I COULDN'T POSSIBLY ...
YOU HAVE TO PAY ME BACK.
Here's my card
HUH?
10000
I can't get home.
DOOM
I DIDN'T THINK OF THAT ...
HERE
WHAT?
...IS CLOSE TO MINE.
YOUR COMPANY ...
BUT... REALLY, I...
That's too much
...YOU'RE HOLDING ON TO COMPANY DOCUMENTS LIKE THEY'RE PRICELESS...
...BUT...
...YOU LET YOUR OWN BAG GET STOLEN.
N TRADING ...
He's a big-shot!
SATURDAY NIGHT ON THE LAST TRAIN ...
YOU'RE RIGHT.
M Co., Ltd.
Chuo Ward, Tokyo 104
tel
OH...
N Trading Co., Ltd.
Keiichi Sakura
uo Ward, Tokyo 104

HEH
YOU'RE SO SILLY ...
...IT'S KIND OF CUTE.
NNGH ...
I took his money
NAKANO-MACHI!
WAIT JUST A--
HE'S NICE...
...BUT A LITTLE FORWARD.
He did save me though.
KOFF
KOFF
And he's got a killer smile

...HE LET ME DOZE ON HIS SHOULDER ...
...FOR ABOUT 30 MINUTES!
BUT ...
trading Co., Ltd.
Keiichi Sakura
Chuo Ward
MAYBE ALL BIG-SHOTS ARE LIKE THAT.
Is that executive profiling?
"SATURDAY NIGHT ON THE LAST TRAIN...
HONK HONK
"...YOU'RE HOLDING ON TO COMPANY DOCUMENTS LIKE THEY'RE PRICELESS.
"YOU'RE SO SILLY IT'S KIND OF CUTE."
...HE UNDER-STANDS ...
...EVERYTHING I'VE GONE THROUGH THESE PAST SIX YEARS. FEELS GOOD...
I FEEL LIKE ...
...

N Trading Co., Ltd.
MR. SAKURA ?
THIS IS ANN MINASE. WE MET ON THE TRAIN.
About the other night
YES, HELLO.
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO MEET.
BUT ...
OH ...
...WILL YOU...
...BE ON THE LAST TRAIN TONIGHT?
DEFINITELY.
GAWUMP
ARE YOU ALWAYS ON THE LAST TRAIN?
YES, USUALLY.
IT MUST BE HARD COMMUTING FROM HACHIOJI.
KLAK
I WAS GOING TO VISIT MY PARENTS.
Thanks for your help
You're welcome
I LIVE IN A NICE FLAT IN KICHIJOJI, ACTUALLY!!
I'm closer to downtown!
BIG DEAL ...
KICHIJOJI
SHIN-JUKU
ANN'S HOUSE
CHUO
I WIN!
MWA HA HA!
FLICK
SIGH

...NOTHING BEATS GRILL MORIHEI!!
It rocks!!
IKKYU IN K BUILDING IS THE PLACE TO GET SOBA.
Really? IS IT GOOD?
FOR WESTERN FOOD ...
I'M LOOKING FOR A GOOD WESTERN-STYLE RESTAURANT.
I'M PRETTY BUMMED OUT ABOUT IT.
THE SOBA I HAD FOR LUNCH TODAY WAS AWFUL...
GLOOM
THIS GUY'S KIND OF COMICAL...
Appearances can be deceiving
OH?
GRILL MORIHEI
RING RING
OH, HI!
TWO HAYASHI RICES, PLEASE!!
HEY!
IT'S HAYASHI OR NOTHING HERE!!
Just eat it!
I WANTED A FRIED-RICE OMELET!!
PUFF
I BET YOU'RE NOT VERY POPULAR AT THE OFFICE.
You're awfully bossy
Fool
IN THE BUSINESS WORLD, THE AGGRESSIVE RULE!
FLIP FLIP
MWA HA HA!
PUFF

HE'S INCORRIGIBLE ...
KARI
HERE YOU GO.
ALL RIGHT! Finally!
!
SEE?
MUNCH
TOLD YOU!!
Good, isn't it?
HE MUST BE...
MUNCH
...VERY POPULAR WITH WOMEN.
I hate to admit it.
THOSE WOMEN ARE COWORKERS OF MINE.
MUNCH MUNCH
THEY ARE?
WHISPER
GLARE
UH-OH ...
THEY'RE GLARING AT ME...
A misunderstanding
Ha ha
THEY'RE SCARY ...
...LIKE DEMONS OR SOMETHING.

I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY CAN TYPE SO WELL WITH THOSE LONG FINGERNAILS.
WATCHING THEM TYPE...
Ouch!
HA HA
THEY REEK OF PERFUME ...
...AND DEPEND ON MEN FOR EVERY-THING.
AND THEY CRY OVER EVERY LITTLE THING.
THEY'RE USELESS.
I...
...HATE PEOPLE WHO ARE WEAK AND SPOILED ...
...MORE THAN ANYTHING IN THE WORLD.

GRAPHIC DETAIL
Ground b meat?
WOW! YOU COOK?
That's why
IT'S GROSS.
...I HATE GETTING GROUND MEAT UNDER THEM.
WHEN I COOK ...
...YOUR NAILS SHORT?
YEAH.
...
KLINK
YOU KEEP ...
WHY DON'T YOU ...
...MAKE LUNCH FOR ME SOMETIME?
TWEET
CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
YOU COULD MAKE IT ON YOUR DAY OFF AND BRING IT THE NEXT DAY.
YOU BET!
I'M PRETTY GOOD.
On my days off

MY MOTHER NEVER COOKED.
ALL RIGHT!
HOMEMADE FOOD!
Tasty!
This is delicious! What is it?
It's yuba-maki
I'm sleepy
And cold.
SHIVER SHIVER
...b

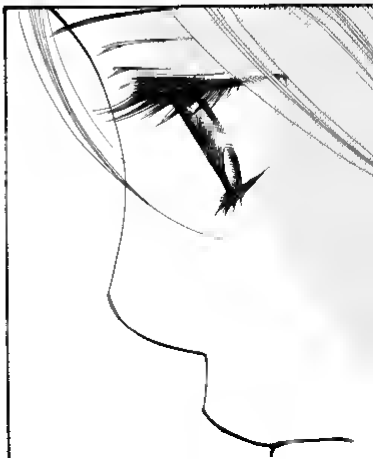
SNAP
SNAP
KAEDE
(STEPMOTHER)
...
MINASE
DO YOU NEED TO STRING SO MANY PEAS?
WHOA!
With all that meat and potatoes?
IS SOMETHING WRONG? YOU'RE NOT YOURSELF LATELY.
ARE YOU...IN LOVE?
No?
..
DEEEL
ANN?

I DON'T KNOW.
I'M NOT ...
...SURE.
I WAS TRYING TO REMEMBER WHAT IT FEELS LIKE ...
...TO BE IN LOVE.
OH...
WHAT'S HE LIKE?
Tell me everything!
HE'S A 32-YEAR-OLD BUSINESSMAN.
HE'S CHILDISH, SELFISH AND ARROGANT ...
...BUT LOVABLE.
Ah ha ha!
I know the type.
DO YOU ENJOY BEING WITH HIM?
YEAH ...
I FIND MYSELF WONDERING WHAT HE'S DOING WHEN I'M NOT THERE.
BUT...
...ONE THING WORRIES ME.

WHAT'S THAT?
NOTH-ING MUCH.
IT'S JUST THAT ...
I HAVEN'T HAD A RELATIONSHIP IN YEARS.
I'M...
...VERY WARY.
Oh, I see.
WELL, I HOPE ...
...THIS ROMANCE BLOOMS!
ANN! CHI!

And I've just been assigned overseas. I go to the U.S. next month.

Keiichiro



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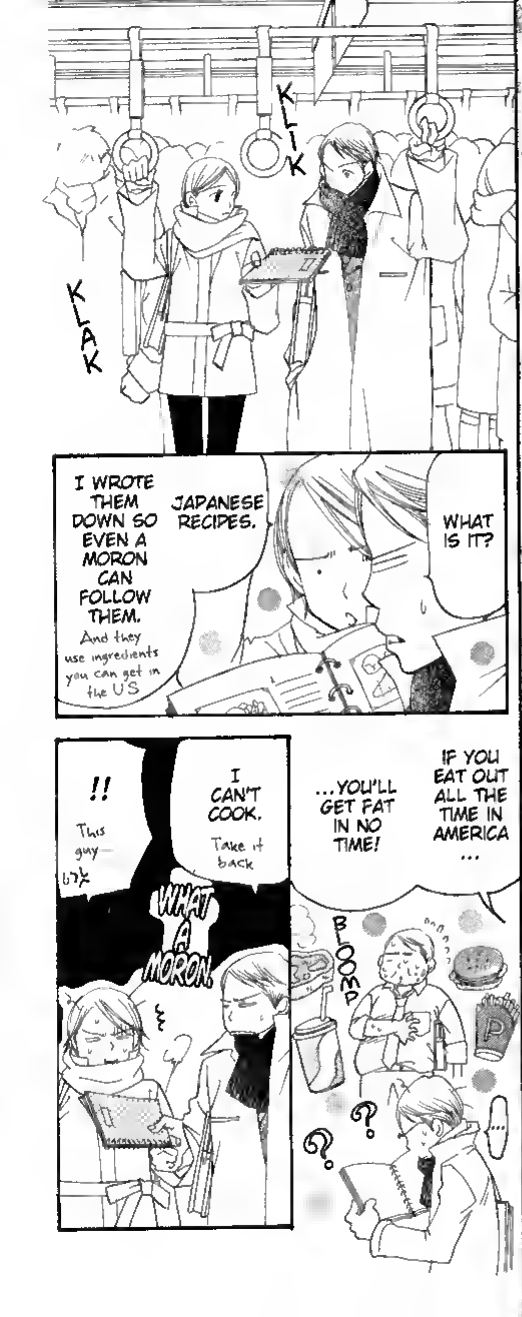

KLIK
KLAK
I HAVE A FAREWELL PRESENT FOR YOU.
WHAT IS IT?
JAPANESE RECIPES.
I WROTE THEM DOWN SO EVEN A MORON CAN FOLLOW THEM.
And they use ingredients you can get in the US
IF YOU EAT OUT ALL THE TIME IN AMERICA ...
...YOU'LL GET FAT IN NO TIME!
BLOOMP
I CAN'T COOK.
Take it back
!!
This guy—
WHAT A MORON

...WORK TOO HARD, OKAY?
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
WELL, DON'T ...
...DON'T FORGET YOUR BELONGINGS ...
KLAK
NEXT STOP, KICHIJOJI ...
MIDDLE OF NEXT MONTH.
WHEN ARE YOU MOVING?
I worked hard on this.
MUTTER MUTTER
THAT'S HOW WORK GOES.
THAT'S AWFULLY SHORT NOTICE.
THANKS FOR REMINDING ME!
YOU'RE NO SPRING CHICKEN.
I'm in my prime!
YOU'LL BE FINE, THOUGH. YOU'RE ALREADY VERY AMERICAN.
YOU'LL ...
...FIT RIGHT IN.
ANN ...
RISING

WILL YOU MARRY ME?
THE DOORS WILL NOW BE CLOSING ...
KLIK KLAK
WHOOPS ...
It's the last tram
HUH?
Pardon me!
I'M GETTING OFF!
BUMP
HISSS

WHAT?!
AND...
...YOU SAID YES?!
YEAH.
CRUNCH CRUNCH
THAT'S WHAT HE TOLD ME.
"'CAUSE I'M SICK OF EATING OUT."
Can you believe it? What a nerve!
...HOLD ON A SECOND!
NOW ...
NOPE.
YOU WEREN'T EVEN DATING ...
...AND YOU HAVEN'T KISSED.
NOPE. NOT ONCE.
...
It's like an arranged marriage!
YOU'RE TAKING A BIG RISK.
IF I SAID NO, I'D NEVER SEEN HIM AGAIN ...
...SO WITHOUT THINKING, I...
It wouldn't work long distance.
Without thinking?
BESIDES ...
...REMEMBER WHAT MICCHON SAID?

IT DIDN'T HAVE TO BE SONODA.
HE WAS JUST HER FIRST.
BUT IS THAT ...
...HOW YOU FEEL?
AT LEAST ...
...IN SIX YEARS ...
...THAT I'VE FELT THIS WAY.
...THIS IS THE FIRST TIME...
WELL ...
...OKAY THEN.

I KNOW YOU CAN'T JUST PACK UP AND GO.
I'm asking a lot
YOU HAVE YOUR JOB TO CONSIDER.
I WISH YOU THE BEST.
EVERY-THING IS HAPPENING TOO FAST ...
YEAH. I don't know where to start
SHOULD WE REGISTER THE MARRIAGE FIRST?
YOU COULD JOIN ME AFTER YOU'VE HAD TIME TO PREPARE.
We'll have a ceremony after things settle down
WE ANNOUNCED IT TO OUR FAMILIES.
AND I TURNED IN MY LETTER OF RESIGNATION.
DAD !!
THUD
Letter of Resignation
YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED ?

I'LL WORK HARD UNTIL MY LAST DAY.
IT'S YOUR LIFE.
I'm really sorry
YOU DON'T NEED TO APOLO-GIZE
CHIEF SAKASHITA
HMM ...
YES. SORRY ...
YOU'VE BEEN VERY KIND TO ME.
We haven't planned it yet
Invite me to the wedding!!
To that guy from N Trading?!
IT'S SO INTENSE ...
WHAT?! SHE'S GETTING MARRIED ?!
I WISH YOU THE BEST.
SHH!
There's no time!
I'VE GOTTA GO ON A BUSINESS TRIP FIRST TOO!
LEAVE THE PACKING TO ME.
Don't miss your train
DOESN'T FEEL REAL...
I'm so busy
501
SAKURA
SAME HERE.

THANKS.
I'LL BE BACK FRIDAY NIGHT.
Don't stress over the packing
GOT IT.
WHEN I GET BACK ...
...WE'LL GO TO CITY HALL TOGETHER.
BYE.
...
WOW!
I should've suspected
It's been years for me.
I...

CLUTTER
WHERE SHOULD I START?
LET'S SEE...
...I'M REALLY GETTING MARRIED...
Hmm
I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE ANYTHING IS.
OH!
SO THIS IS WHAT HE READS...
Very highbrow
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT BOOKS MY FIANCÉ LIKES!
THE TRUTH IS, I AM A LITTLE UNEASY ABOUT ALL THIS...
I love this book!
...BUT HAPPINESS ONLY COMES TO THOSE...
...WHO REACH FOR IT.

I'M NOT AS WEAK AS I USED TO BE.
I SHOULD WASH THE SHEETS TOO.
WE'LL TAKE EACH PROBLEM ...
...AS IT COMES.
IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
THEY LOOK GRUBBY.
TAK
TIG
PING
ROLL ROLL ROLL

OH ...
IT'S A FOLI FOLI.
THIS WAS A NEW DESIGN LAST SUMMER?
I knew it!
YOU GOT IT LAST SUMMER, RIGHT?
YES!! I BOUGHT THE SAME PAIR!!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU HAVE THE SAME ONES!
DON'T WEAR THEM TO WORK, OKAY?
So we don't match!
THAT WAS...
...WITHIN THE LAST SIX MONTHS.

I ASSUMED HE HAD EX-GIRLFRIENDS, BUT...
IS THERE... ANOTHER WOMAN?
OR WAS THERE?
...IN THE LAST HALF YEAR?
I'm not stupid
...
THERE WAS...
AND IT WAS OVER LONG BEFORE I PROPOSED TO YOU.
IS THAT A PROBLEM?

...
I BET SHE LEFT IT HERE ON PURPOSE.
FLICK
I DIDN'T KNOW HOW HIGH MAINTENANCE SHE WAS UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.
SHE'D ALWAYS BUST OUT CRYING ...
PLOP
NON-BURNABLE GARBAGE
SHE WAS WEAK AND THOUGHT I'D ALWAYS FORGIVE HER.
I'M GLAD YOU'RE NOT LIKE THAT.
YOU DON'T CRY OVER EVERYTHING.

GLUB GLUB
GLUB GLUB
GLUB GLUB
ANN?
KNOCK
KNOCK
YOU'VE BEEN IN THERE FOREVER !!
YOUR GRANDMA'S ON THE PHONE!!
HELLO, GRANDMA?
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT A GIFT.
DRIP
I WON'T BE MOVING UNTIL LATER.
OH, DON'T CRY, GRANDMA.
Heh..

I'VE NEVER HEARD ...
...YOUR GRANDMA SO EXCITED!
WHEN I TOLD HER ON THE PHONE ...
..SHE BURST INTO TEARS. SHE TOLD ME HOW HAPPY SHE WAS.
Heh heh heh
"Even agres weep"
YEAH ...
OH ...
...I ALMOST FORGOT.
THIS WAS MY LATE GRAND-MOTHER'S.
IT'S A TROUSSEAU.
IT'S YOURS NOW.
GLUP GLUP GLUP
It's okay, Dad You can marry me!
Ann

Winter, Age 26
Evanescent -ộ-

All of a sudden, Ann is 26! I think that's a difficult age to categorize. It depends on when you start working for a living.

-ộ-

I began working in manga when I was a student. I've always wondered what it would be like to work in an office. + +
It must be nice to have lunch in a fancy place and wear a company cardigan working somewhere like, say, Maruneuchi. (Obviously, I watch too many TV dramas.)

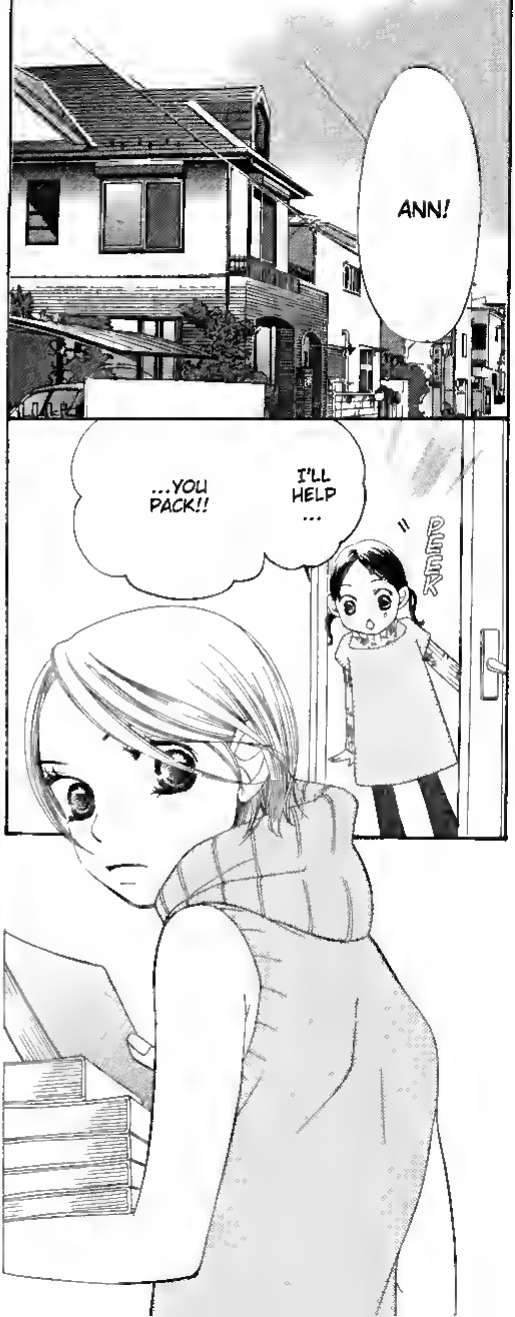
-ộ-

Working women always look pretty. Very nice.

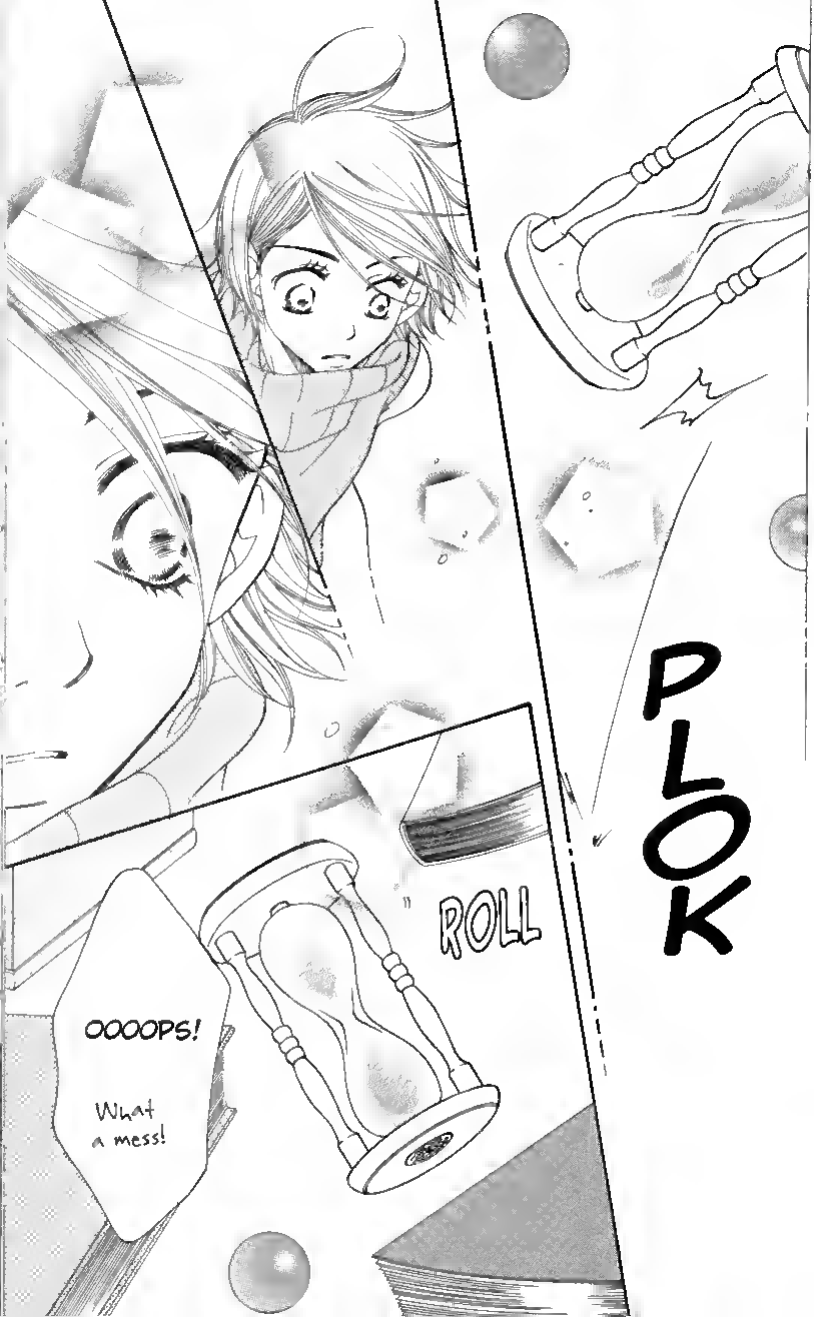
The story is speeding toward the end. I hope you'll stick with me all the way!

See you next volume!

Hinako Ashihara



YOU'RE GOING TO GET MARRIED AND LIVE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY WITH YOUR HUSBAND...
GET HIM TO BUY YOU SOMETHING BETTER THERE!
You're too young for that bag!
WHAT ABOUT THE LIGHT BLUE PURSE I GAVE YOU?
NEED
NEED
DON'T NEED
I WANT THIS ONE!!
THAT ONE IS FOR KIDS!
I WANT THIS BAG TOO!!
THIS ONE!
WHAT ?!
WOW! LIFE OVERSEAS WITH A HANDSOME, ELITE BUSINESSMAN! I'M JEALOUS!
Hmph! He could do so much better
SHE CAME HERE TO MOOCH ?
Little brat!
Zip it, Sis!
FLIP
THUD
FWAP
AGH !!!
WOBBLE
HANDS OFF MY BIBLES !!!
YOU WON'T NEED THIS HOARD OF SHOJO MANGA EITHER.
UMPH


PLOK
ROLL
OOOOPS!
What a mess!

I FOUND THIS ...
SORRY... IS IT IMPORTANT?
Did it break?
AN HOUR-GLASS?
Sand Museum
THEY WERE SELLING THESE AT THE GIFT SHOP.
THEY HAVE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST HOURGLASS THERE.
...AT THE SAND MUSEUM IN NIMA.
THAT THING ...
THE WORLD'S BIGGEST?
YEAH. SEVENTEEN FEET TALL. A GIANT ONE-YEAR HOUR-GLASS.
Like, this big!
MOM TOOK ME THERE WHEN I WAS A KID...
I SEE ...
One year

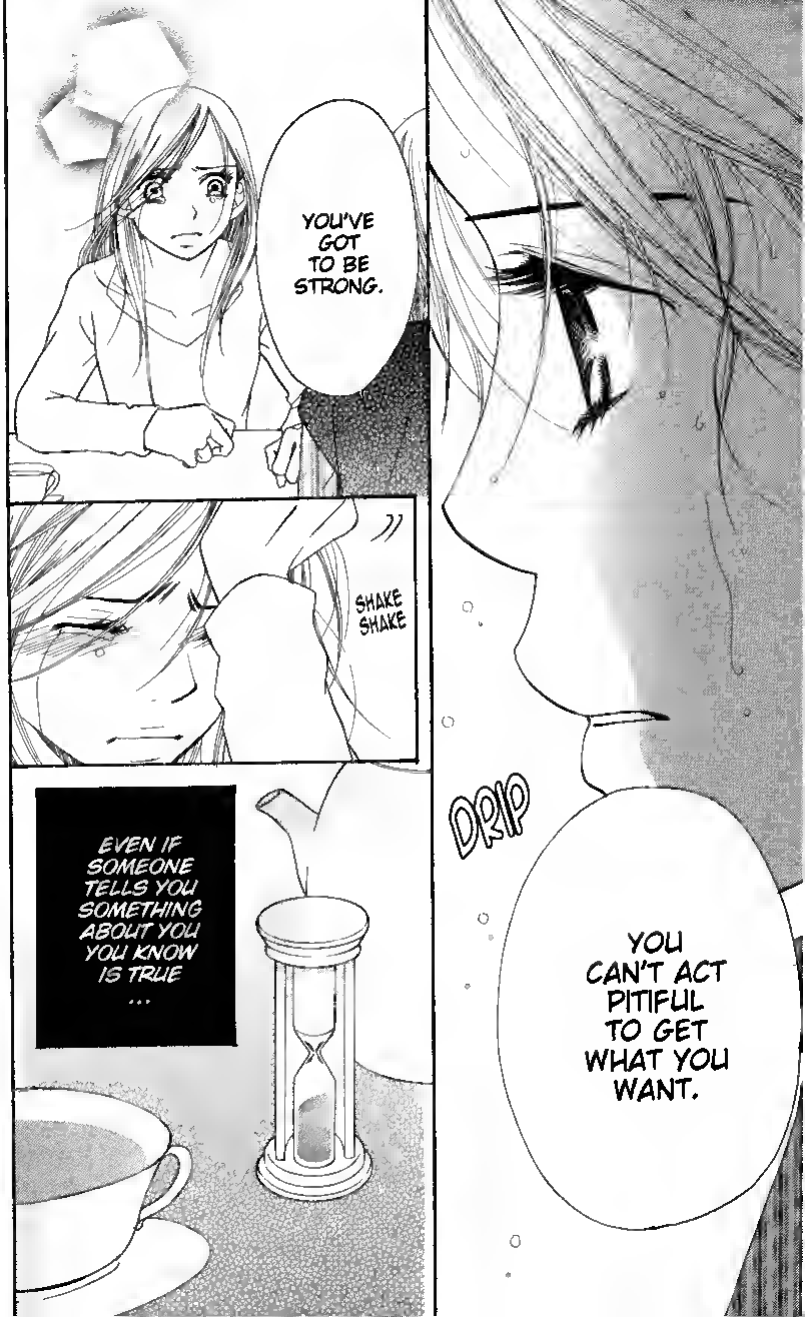
I MEAN... LOOK..
...IT WAS IN THIS BOX WITH ALL YOUR VALUABLES.
I DON'T NEED IT ANYMORE. IT'S ALL YOURS.
BUT...I THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT ...
I couldn't!
"I WILL..."
"...NEVER LEAVE YOU."
...
I'VE FORGOTTEN ABOUT ALL THAT.
I LOCKED IT AWAY A LONG TIME AGO...

I DON'T NEED IT ANYMORE.
I'M NOT ...
SQUEEZE
...WEAK LIKE I WAS BACK THEN.

SOME-ONE'S HERE TO SEE YOU.
A friend?
ANN!
KEIICHIRO'S EX-GIRLFRIEND ...
UM ...
I'M...
...SEEMED TOUGH AT FIRST.
...SAW YOU AND KEIICHIRO TOGETHER AT A RESTAURANT.
A FRIEND FROM WORK ...
YOU WERE WEARING YOUR COMPANY UNIFORM ...
...SO I LOOKED IT UP ...
And here I am.
HERE'S YOUR ASSAM TEA.
KLINK
WAIT UNTIL ALL THE SAND FALLS BEFORE YOU DRINK IT.
TOK
KSSSSH

PLEASE ...
KSSS
SH
I'M BEGGING YOU!
I'M FALLING APART ...
WITHOUT HIM, I ...
...BREAK UP WITH HIM.
KSSSH
YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM BACK

KSSSH
EVEN IF I BROKE UP WITH HIM ...
...HE WOULDN'T GO BACK TO YOU.
YOU SHOULD KNOW HIM BETTER THAN THAT.
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL THOUGH.
BUT YOU CAN'T TURN BACK TIME.
SPLASH
!
HOW DARE YOU TALK TO ME THAT WAY!!
Whoa
SHOCK
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW I FEEL!
YES, I DO.


YOU'VE GOT TO BE STRONG.
SHAKE SHAKE
EVEN IF SOMEONE TELLS YOU SOMETHING ABOUT YOU YOU KNOW IS TRUE ...
DRIP
YOU CAN'T ACT PITIFUL TO GET WHAT YOU WANT.

IT ISN'T EASY TO CHANGE.
I KNOW THAT ALL TOO WELL.
WHY ARE YOU ALL WET?
CAT FIGHT.
WHAAAT?!
I'M ALL RIGHT. I'LL GO CHANGE.
I...
...CAN'T BELIEVE SHE THREW HER WATER IN MY FACE!
Like a soap opera
SHE'S JUST LIKE ...
...I USED TO BE.
AND THAT'S NOT SOMEONE I WANT TO REMEMBER.
I WASN'T STRONG EITHER ...

...AND I WAS ALWAYS LEANING ON DAIGO.
PEEK
RING RING RING
...
YOU SHOULDN'T ...
...THROW AWAY THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU.

DÉJÀ VU...
DAIGO ...
TOK
"DON'T EVER TRY TO ERASE... YOUR MOST IMPORTANT FEELINGS, OKAY?"
HEH
"YOU SHOULDN'T BREAK SOMETHING THAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU."
Oki works for [illegible] Lumber now. Daigo couldn't find an open position in Shimane, so he went to Sakura Second Elementary School in Okayama. For now, it's just a temporary position. Can you imagine him teaching? I can't!
—Naka
NAKA TOLD ME ABOUT IT IN A LETTER.
...IS TEACHING AT AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN OKAYAMA.
"TRY HARDER..."
HE TAUGHT ME ABOUT TRUE STRENGTH.
HE ALWAYS KNEW WHERE HE WAS GOING.
DAIGO WAS ALWAYS SO KIND AND FULL OF LIFE.

"...AND NEVER GIVE UP."
YOUR EX CAME TO SEE ME TODAY.
SQUEEZE
2R RING
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
WHAT DID SHE DO?
NOTHING TOO HORRIBLE.
GOOD. THEN LET'S FORGET ABOUT IT.

SOME-
TIMES
...
...YOU'RE
SO CRUEL.
YOU JUST
THROW
PEOPLE
AWAY.
DID
YOU JUST
DUMP HER
WITHOUT
WARNING?
ANYWAY,
ABOUT THE
MARRIAGE
REGIS-
TRA—
WHAT'S
YOUR
POINT?
I'VE
...
NOTICED
THAT
ABOUT
YOU.
I
DON'T
DO
CHARITY.
I
WENT
OUT
WITH HER
BECAUSE
I LIKED
HER.
WHEN
I DIDN'T
LIKE HER
ANYMORE,
I BROKE
UP WITH
HER.
IT'S
AS
SIMPLE
AS THAT.
IT WAS
YOUR
CHOICE TO
MARRY
ME.
BUT
...
LOOK
...
...IF
WE'RE
GOING
TO BE
TOGETHER
FOREVER
...

IT'S ANNOYING.
BUT ...
WHY WOULD I STAY WITH HER IF I DON'T WANT HER?
DON'T MAKE ME GO THROUGH THIS AGAIN.
I LOST ALL PATIENCE FOR SENSITIVITY.
MY FATHER WAS WEAK.
AND MY MOTHER NEVER DID ANYTHING BUT COMPLAIN.
BEING BROUGHT UP BY PEOPLE LIKE THAT ...
...
OKAY, I'LL EXPLAIN ...

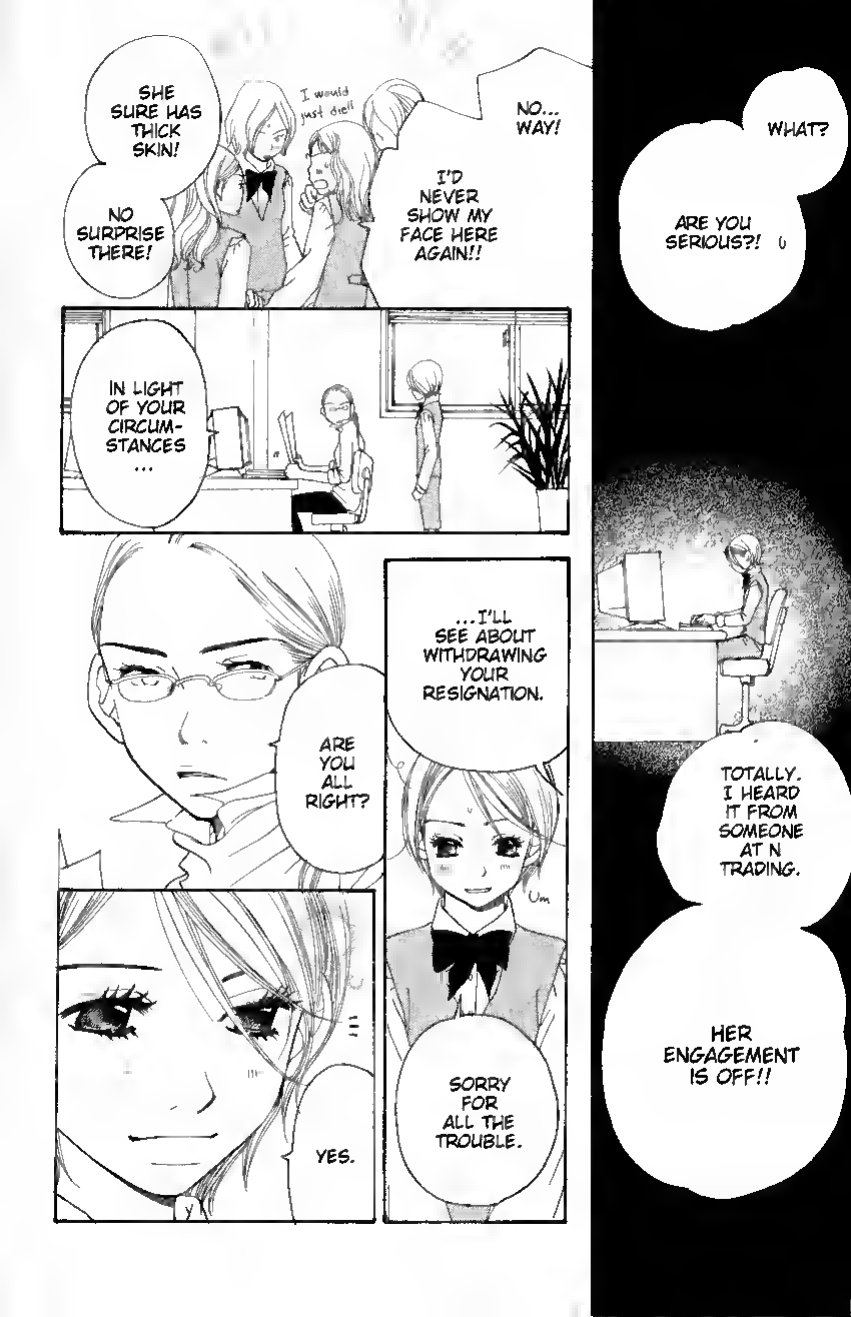
SENSITIVITY RUINS PEOPLE.
IT HAS NO FUNCTION.
THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE.
AND I'LL NEVER CHANGE.
HE'S NOT SAYING ...
...ANY-THING WRONG.
I SHOULD KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT.
THERE'S A THIN LINE BETWEEN STRENGTH AND SENSITIVITY ...
BUT...
AND TRUE STRENGTH REQUIRES KINDNESS.

SOMEONE ...
...TOLD ME THAT ONCE...
PLEASE, UNDER-STAND ...
...
WHO'S THIS "SOMEONE"?
HUH?
YOUR EX?

EEP!
HE JUST MOLDED YOU INTO THINKING THAT WAY.
AND NOW YOU'RE TRYING TO MOLD ME.
RRRIP
NO, KEIICHI ...

RRRRIP
RRRIP
RRRIP
I WAS GOING TO SUBMIT THIS TOMORROW, BUT NOW...
Date issued
Nationality
Mother and father's name
Father
Mother

...WHAT'S THE POINT?
Street
tionsh
Received by,
Date
Marriage Registration
Date
Mayor
Birthplace
Current address


WHAT?
ARE YOU SERIOUS?!
TOTALLY. I HEARD IT FROM SOMEONE AT N TRADING.
HER ENGAGEMENT IS OFF!!
NO... WAY!
I'D NEVER SHOW MY FACE HERE AGAIN!!
I would just die!!
SHE SURE HAS THICK SKIN!
NO SURPRISE THERE!
IN LIGHT OF YOUR CIRCUM-STANCES ...
...I'LL SEE ABOUT WITHDRAWING YOUR RESIGNATION.
Um
SORRY FOR ALL THE TROUBLE.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES.

HANG IN THERE, ANN.
PAT
ANN! I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED!
DON'T LET IT GET YOU DOWN!
I just got dumped too!
THAT'S RIGHT! CHEER UP, ANN!
SLAP
You too!
ARE YOU SURE YOU WERE REALLY ENGAGED?
How about a singles party?
AH HA HA HA
Think she imagined it?
IT'S POSSIBLE !!
Weird!

I GUESS IT JUST ...
...WASN'T MEANT TO BE
YEAH. You're right
OH.
.. NOTHING MUCH
CHAK
...YOUR GRAND-MOTHER SAY?
WHAT DID .
... RUSTLE
PATTER PATTER PATTER
SIS!
I DON'T WANT YOUR BAGS.
What a pain...
Why not?!
REALLY, I DON'T.
DUMP
HERE!
I'LL GIVE YOU MY BAGS!!
I don't need them!!
NO WAY!
I want my bag back
ANN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

ANN...
...I WANT YOU TO KNOW...
YEAH. I'm fine
SSSIP
...HOW MUCH ...
...I LOVE YOU.
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
Are you proposing?
Oh I'm blushing!
DON'T LAUGH!

BEEEP
BEEEP

BEEP
BAM
BEEEP
BEEEP

...
KLIITCH

KSCSH
TOK
YOU'LL BE LATE FOR WORK!
ANN!

SCHK
IT'S GOING TO RAIN THIS EVENING.
REALLY?
YOU LOOK TIRED, ANN.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
Mommy! Comb my hair!
Heh
YOU'LL BE LATE TOO, KAEDE.
AND, YES, I'M FINE.
REALLY?
ANN' LEAVING ALREADY?
TAKE CARE.
HAVE A GOOD DAY!
Early, as usual
FWEEEET
THE TRAIN IS NOW ARRIVING AT...

SIGH
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
NEXT STOP, OKIKUBO ...
KLAK
I CAN'T GO ON ...
I NEED TO REST.
...
KLIK
KLAK
I FEEL SICK ...
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
SOME-THING'S WRONG WITH ME.
I'm dizzy
KOFF
THE TRAIN IS NOW ARRIVING ...
BUT...
I HAVE TO GO...
I'LL BE LATE ...
DAZE

CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
STAND BEHIND THE YELLOW LINE...
HOSPITAL DIRECTORY
INTERNAL MEDICINE
RESPIRATORY UNIT
WEEKDAYS
SATURDAY
REALLY?
BUT...
SINCE YOU'VE HAD SIMILAR SYMPTOMS BEFORE...
...HEADACHE, LETHARGY, ACHES AND PAINS...
PHYSICALLY, YOU'RE HEALTHY.

YOU NEED TO TAKE A BREAK ...
...AND RELAX.
...YOU MIGHT CONSIDER THERAPY.
YOU'RE PUSHING YOURSELF TOO HARD.

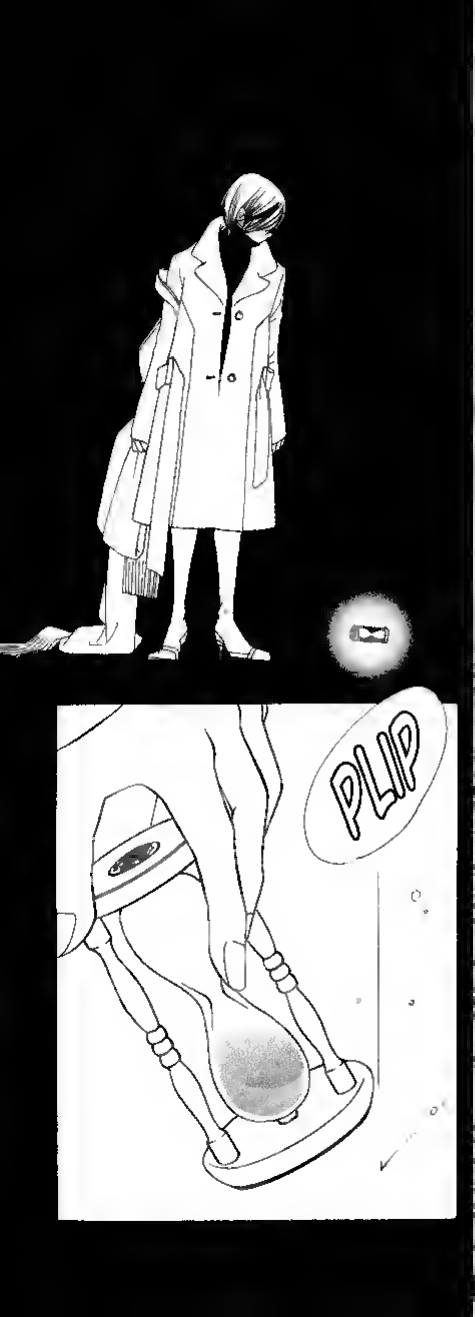
I'll give you some nutritional supplements
YOUR CONDITION IS BECOMING COMMON AMONG WORKING WOMEN
I DON'T UNDERSTAND ...
"KEEP TRYING ..."
"...AND NEVER GIVE UP."
"HANG IN THERE, ANN."
"CHEER UP, ANN!"
"YOU CAN'T TELL YOUR MOM TO WORK HARDER ANYMORE."

"SHE WORKED AND WORKED-- AND WORKED HERSELF TOO HARD."
"NOW, SHE'S WORN HERSELF OUT..."
YOU TELL ME TO TRY HARDER ...
...AND *NOT* TO TRY TOO HARD...
...TO HANG IN THERE... BUT TO TAKE IT EASY...
"YOU CAN'T ASK SOMEONE IN THAT STATE TO WORK ANY HARDER."

BUMP
HEY!
MISS?
WATCH IT!!
TOK
"LOOK! THEY'VE GOT A GIFT SHOP!"
"WILL YOU BUY ME AN HOUR-GLASS?"
IF YOU CAN'T MAKE UP YOUR MIND...
...JUST SHUT UP!!

"OKAY. BUT CHOOSE A SMALL ONE, ALL RIGHT?"
I don't have much on me.
Dear Father and Mother, Please take care of Ann for me. Miwako
"THEY FOUND HER NEAR THE PEAK!!"
"SHE'S DEAD."
"YOU LIED TO ME!"

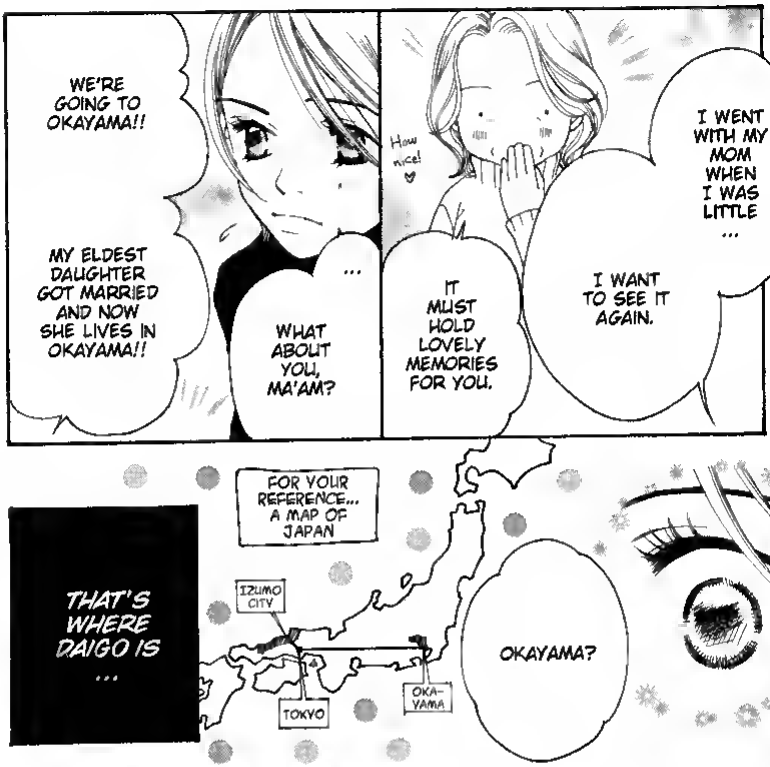
I'VE WISHED THAT SO MANY TIMES.
I HAVEN'T FELT ALIVE SINCE THAT WINTER.
TIME HAS STOPPED FOR ME.
"ONE YEAR LOOKS SO LONG LIKE THIS ..."
It's so big!
ALL THE TIME WE'D SPENT TOGETHER... WAS LIKE A DREAM.
IF ONLY IT WERE ALL JUST A BAD DREAM ...
FROM HERE ...
...MY LIFE DOESN'T SEEM REAL BACK THEN.


The World's Biggest One-Year Hourglass Sand Calendar
Dimensions
Height 17 FT
Diameter 3 FT
Weight of Sand 1.0 T
"THE WORLD'S BIGGEST ONE-YEAR HOURGLASS ..."
"SEVENTEEN FEET TALL AND ONE TON OF SAND..."
PLIP

FWOOSH
HONNNK
TSSSHH
...IT'S RAINING SO HARD.
WOW ...
SPLASH SPLASH SPLASH
TAKE YOUR TIME LOOKING AROUND.
I'LL BE IN OUR SLEEPER COMPARTMENT.
I'm going to bed
OKAY! ♡
NOT AT ALL LIKE WHEN I WAS YOUNG!
LOOK AT HOW NICE IT IS!
Used to be so shabby
I KNOW. YOU'VE TOLD ME.
NO WAY!!
Is the train gonna stop?
THEY'VE ISSUED A TRAVEL ADVISORY.
KLIK
MMMM
KLIK
KLAK
IT MIGHT LET UP BY MORNING.

RATTLE
HELLO, MISS...
KLIK
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
ARE YOU ALL BY YOURSELF?
IT'S UNUSUAL FOR A YOUNG WOMAN TO TRAVEL ALONE ON THE NIGHT TRAIN.
OH... IS IT?
I SUPPOSE THEY USUALLY RIDE THE SHINKANSEN. IT'S FASTER...
MY DAUGHTER WANTED TO GO ON THE NOZOMI LINE...
...BUT I INSISTED ON THIS ONE.
...BUT SOMETIMES IT'S NICE TO TAKE A LEISURELY RIDE LIKE THIS, ISN'T IT?

UH-OH ...
AM I TALKING TOO MUCH ...?
My daughter says I never shut up
HEH HEH HEH HEH
NO, NOT AT ALL. ////
BACK THEN, IT WASN'T SO NICELY FURBISHED! ////
HEH
...BETWEEN TOKYO AND OSAKA.
I TOOK THE NIGHT TRAIN A LOT WHEN I WAS YOUNGER ...
WHEEEE!!
WHERE ARE YOU HEADED?
SHE...
...REMINDS ME OF DAIGO'S MOM A LITTLE.
HONNK
SHIMANE.
IZUMOSHI STATION.
TSSHH
OH. THAT'S THE LAST STOP.
I WANT TO SEE ...
...THE BIG ONE-YEAR HOURGLASS ...
...AT THE NIMA SAND MUSEUM.


WE'RE GOING TO OKAYAMA!!
MY ELDEST DAUGHTER GOT MARRIED AND NOW SHE LIVES IN OKAYAMA!!
...
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MA'AM?
How nice!
IT MUST HOLD LOVELY MEMORIES FOR YOU.
I WENT WITH MY MOM WHEN I WAS LITTLE ...
I WANT TO SEE IT AGAIN.
THAT'S WHERE DAIGO IS ...
FOR YOUR REFERENCE... A MAP OF JAPAN
IZUMO CITY
TOKYO
OKA-YAMA
OKAYAMA?
THEY JUST HAD A BABY.
I CAN'T WAIT TO MEET HER!!
I HAVE SOME PHOTOS WITH ME. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THEM? WOULD YOU?
Uh... Sure.

I HAVE A FRIEND ...
...WHO LIVES IN OKAYAMA.
HE TEACHES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
But my daughter's a fighter
LOOKS THAT WAY, DOESN'T IT?
WOW! WHAT A HAPPY FAMILY!
And a big one too!
ACTUALLY, MY DAUGHTER AND HER MOTHER-IN-LAW ARE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS!
NO JOKE!
No way!
That woman is scary!
HE'S SERIOUS ...
...AND PROBABLY SCOLDS THEM SOMETIMES.
I BET HE PLAYS WITH THE KIDS DURING RECESS...
Hey!
...BUT I'M SURE HE'S A TERRIFIC TEACHER.
WE'VE FALLEN OUT OF TOUCH ...
Ow
AND THE KIDS PROBABLY CALL HIM BY HIS FIRST NAME.
Call me Mr. Kitamura!
My jello belongs to me!
Gimme your jello
Daigo, eat my carrots!
AND HE'LL MAKE MISTAKES IN ADDITION.
Wrong again, Daigo
Daigo, that's wrong

...I HOPE...
...WE'LL BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THIS AND LAUGH.
MISS ...
...YOU LOOK A LITTLE WORN OUT.
YOU SHOULD GET SOME REST.
YES... GOOD NIGHT.
SORRY ...
...FOR TALKING YOUR LEG OFF.
KLAK
RATTLE
KLIK
YES.
SOME-DAY...
...AFTER WE'VE BOTH MET SOMEONE ELSE...
...AND GOTTEN MARRIED AND HAD KIDS...
AH HA HA
THAT'S THE KIND OF GUY HE IS.
...
IS HE... IMPORTANT TO YOU?

MEOW
MEOW
...DISSOLVE INTO BUBBLES ...
IF I DISAPPEAR INTO IT...
...MAYBE I CAN FINALLY REST...
GLUB
GLUB GLUB
GLUB GLUB
SSSSSSH
I'M DRIFTING ...
...DRIFTING AWAY...
KLAK
MMMMM
FEELS GOOD ...
...LIKE FLOATING IN WATER.
KLAK

KURO II...
MEOW
KURO ...?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
MEOW
LAST NIGHT'S RAINS CONTINUE ...
...WITH NO SIGN OF LETTING UP.
BIP
KA-CHIK
ZZZ
HE'S DONE IT AGAIN!
Fallen asleep with the TV on!!
6

TSSHH
TSSHH
IT'S POURING OUT THERE!
PLOK
JAPANESE REVIEW
TSSHH
SIGH
"GRANDMA ..."

...
RING
"I'M SORRY TO TELL YOU...
"...THE ENGAGEMENT IS OFF."
RING
RING
IS ANN THERE?
MRS. UEKUSA? IT'S KAEDE.
I'M SORRY TO CALL SO LATE.
HELLO?

SHE HASN'T COME HOME.
SHE'S NOT A CHILD ...
...I'M SURE SHE'S JUST OUT SOMEWHERE, BUT...
I CAN'T REACH HER ON HER CELL PHONE ...
...AND SHE DIDN'T SHOW UP AT WORK TODAY.
AFTER EVERYTHING THAT JUST HAPPENED ...
...I'M WORRIED ABOUT HER ...
WOBBLE
JOSTLE
KRASSH
HELLO? MRS. UEKUSA?

I'VE...
TAK
...HAD AN UNEASY FEELING LATELY ...
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
MIWAKO ...

MIWAKO IS...
...GOING TO TAKE ANN AWAY!

KLAK
I HEAR MOM IN THE DISTANCE ...
KLAK
"ANN...
"...YOU CAN REST NOW."
KLAK
NEXT STOP, OKAYAMA ...

Glossary

If only adolescence came with an instruction manual.
We can't give you that, but this glossary of terms
might prove useful for this volume

Page 4: evanescent
Originally the word *utakata*, which has the connotation of something vanishing like smoke. It could also be translated as "transient, fragile, bubble, foam." Indeed, one of the kanji means "bubble," and Ann talks in this chapter about turning into bubbles and disappearing into water. "Evanescent" poetically captures these various nuances.

Page 11, panel 4: Coming-of-Age ceremony
Coming-of-Age Day is usually the second Monday in January. Youth turning twenty attend ceremonies and parties to celebrate becoming an adult.

Page 16, panel 5: *shochu*
Shochu is an alcoholic beverage made from fermented rice or potatoes that is similar to vodka.

Page 16, panel 5: *ponshu*
Nihonshu, or Japanese *sake*.

Page 30, panel 5: *furisode*
A kind of kimono for young adult, unmarried women characterized by long sleeves. Often worn by girls at their Coming-of-Age ceremony.

Page 41, panel 6: "Naka looks like his daughter."
In the original, the friend said Naka and her boyfriend looked like an *enko*-couple. *Enko* is short for *enjo kosai*, which literally means "compensated relationship dating." As with paid escorts in the U.S., the pairing usually consists of an older person paying for the companionship of a younger person.

Page 47, panel 6: closing ceremony
Originally *ote wo hatshaku*, a request to begin clapping in unison to a predetermined rhythm. A ritual people perform at the end of a gathering.

Page 52, panel 8: *Izumo soba*
Soba are buckwheat noodles. Many regions around Japan have a special local method of preparation.

Page 97, panel 2: the witch
Originally *otsubone*, a term used to denote a woman with a long professional career. Historically, an *otsubone* was a lord's high-ranking first wife.

Page 112, panel 3: *yubamaki*
Yuba is tofu skin or dried beancurd. *Yubamaki* (literally "tofu skin roll") is *yuba* around some kind of filling.

Page 123, panel 3, "Should we register the marriage first?"
In Japan, people legalize their marriage by registering at a local government office. The wedding ceremony for family and friends is merely a celebration and often occurs long after registration.

Page 132, panel 1: "Even ogres weep."
The original is a shortened version of the saying *oni no me nimo namida*. The general sense of this expression is that even cold or unemotional people cry.

Page 132, panel 7: wedding money envelopes
The kanji on these envelopes, *kotobuki*, means "longevity" and "congratulations." People usually give money enclosed in these envelopes to a marrying couple.

Page 139, panel 6: company uniform
While it isn't as prevalent as it used to be, many companies in Japan still require female employees to wear uniforms. The male employee's "uniform" is often just a Western-style suit.

Profile of Hinako Ashihara

This time the story is about Ann's life at 20 and 26. I thought this was a long way off, but now Ann is all of 26! Amazing!
—Hinako Ashihara

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Hinako Ashihara won the 50th Shogakukan Manga Award for *Sunadokei*. She debuted with *Sono Hanashi Okotowari Shimasu* in *Bessatsu Shojo Comics* in 1994. Her other works include *SOS*, *Forbidden Dance*, and *Tennen Bitter Chocolate*.